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Knowledge Hiding and Occupational Stress: A Systematic Review and Sectoral Analysis

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Abstract
Employee performance and organizational outcomes are influenced by critical factors such as knowledge hiding and occupational stress across various sectors. A systematic review is conducted, and findings from 130 studies are synthesized to explore the interplay between knowledge hiding, occupational stress, and their impact on employees. Key antecedents of knowledge hiding, such as ethical leadership, workplace incivility, and organizational politics, are identified, and the role of occupational stress in mediating or moderating these relationships is examined. It is revealed that stress levels are exacerbated by knowledge hiding, resulting in reduced job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and performance. The negative effects are mitigated by ethical leadership and supportive work environments. Differences across sectors are highlighted, with knowledge hiding and stress being found to be more prevalent in high-pressure industries like IT, restaurant, and healthcare. A comprehensive framework for understanding these phenomena is provided, and practical recommendations are offered to organizations for fostering knowledge sharing and reducing stress.

Keywords: *Knowledge hiding, occupational stress, consequences, sectoral analysis, systematic review*

JEL Classification: C18, D83, I12, J28, J81, L20, O14

Introduction

Rapid transformation is common at the modern workplace, driven by technological advancements, globalization, and increasing competition. Two critical issues have emerged as significant challenges for organizations during rapid transformation: knowledge hiding and occupational stress. The intentional concealment of information requested by others (Connelly & Zweig, 2015;

Haque, 2024) has been defined as knowledge hiding and has been found to undermine collaboration, innovation, and organizational performance. Common response to attack or disturbance of natural equilibrium (Haque, 2022). Burnout, absenteeism, and reduced productivity have been linked to occupational stress, which is caused by excessive job demands and inadequate resources (Kaur, 2023). Additionally, the independent study of these phenomena has been conducted, but their interplay has remained underexplored, particularly across different sectors. This gap in the literature limits our understanding of how knowledge hiding and occupational stress jointly affect employees and organizations, and how these effects may vary across industries.

The potential of this research to provide actionable insights for organizations striving to enhance employee well-being and performance highlights its significance. Knowledge hiding and occupational stress are not treated as isolated issues; instead, they are recognized as interconnected and often exacerbating one another. For instance, knowledge hiding may be resorted to by employees experiencing high levels of stress as a coping mechanism, while a toxic work environment may be created by a culture of knowledge hiding, further increasing stress levels (Haque, 2024). Understanding these dynamics is crucial for developing effective interventions that address both issues simultaneously.

Several limitations have been identified despite researchers have shown more focus on knowledge hiding and occupational stress. First, these constructs have been examined in isolation, with their interplay largely neglected (Urbański et al., 2024). Second, the prevalence and impact of these phenomena across different sectors have remained under-explored. For example, higher levels of knowledge hiding and stress have been observed in high-pressure industries such as IT and healthcare compared to other sectors (Haque et al., 2016). Third, a comprehensive understanding of these issues has been hindered by the absence of systematic reviews that synthesize the existing literature.

The aim of this research is to investigate the interplay between knowledge hiding and occupational stress across different sectors, identifying key antecedents, consequences, and sector-specific differences.

By synthesizing the findings from 130 studies, this systematic review seeks to address the following research questions:

- What are the primary antecedents and consequences of knowledge hiding?
- How does occupational stress influence knowledge-hiding behaviors?
- What sector-specific differences exist in the prevalence and impact of these phenomena?

A holistic framework for understanding the complex relationship between knowledge hiding and occupational stress is provided by this review as a contribution to the literature. Practical recommendations are also offered for organizations to foster knowledge sharing, reduce stress, and enhance employee performance. By addressing these issues, a more supportive and productive work environment can be created, ultimately allowing sustainable growth and competitiveness to be achieved.

Literature Review

The literature review is organized into three main themes: (1) Antecedents and Consequences of Knowledge Hiding, (2) Causes and Outcomes of Occupational Stress, and (3) The Interplay Between Knowledge Hiding and Occupational Stress. To provide a clear overview, Table 1

summarizes the key studies used in this review, their major findings, and references.

Knowledge Hiding: Antecedents and Consequences

The act of withholding information requested by others is considered a deliberate one, and it is influenced by individual, interpersonal, and organizational factors (Haque, 2024). At the individual level, higher tendencies to hide knowledge have been linked to personality traits such as neuroticism and Machiavellianism (Demirkasımoğlu, 2015). Workplace incivility and lack of trust are found to exacerbate this behavior at the interpersonal level (Aljawarneh & Atan, 2018). The role of organizational factors, including perceived politics and unethical leadership are evident to be significant (Abdullah et al., 2019).

Team cohesion is undermined, innovation is stifled, and organizational performance is reduced by knowledge hiding (Labafi, 2017; Haque, 2024). Guilt and reduced job satisfaction are often experienced by employees who are engaged in the act of knowledge hiding, which can lead to further escalation of stress levels (Connelly & Zweig, 2015: Urbański et al., 2024). Several studies found that employee creativity is negatively affected by knowledge hiding, particularly in highly politicized work environments (Malik et al., 2019; Faizan et al., 2022; Urbański et al., 2024).

Occupational Stress: Causes and Outcomes

A mismatch between job demands and employees' ability to cope leads to the emergence of occupational stress (Haque, 2023; Kaur & Haque, 2024). Common stressors, such as excessive workloads, lack of autonomy, and poor work-life balance, are identified as contributing factors (Haque et al., 2018; Kaur, 2023; Haq et al., 2024). Mental health is negatively impacted by stress, leading to anxiety, depression, and burnout (Ofoegbu & Nwadiani, 2006). Organizational outcomes, including increased turnover and reduced productivity are resultants of by stress (Kumasey et al., 2014).

It has been evident in sector-specific studies that stress levels vary across industries (Faizan & Zehra, 2016; Zehra & Faizan, 2017; Jose et al., 2018). For instance, higher stress levels are reported by employees in the IT and healthcare sectors due to the demanding nature of their work (Haque et al., 2016; Faizan & Zehra, 2016; Zehra & Faizan, 2017;). Similarly, it was found by Faizan and Haque (2019) that stress levels are influenced by gender, with higher stress often experienced by women in male-dominated industries.

The Interplay Between Knowledge Hiding and Occupational Stress

A bidirectional relationship between knowledge hiding and occupational stress is suggested by recent studies. On one hand, knowledge hiding is triggered by stress, as self-preservation is prioritized over collaboration (Haque, 2024). On the other hand, stress is exacerbated by knowledge hiding, which creates a toxic work environment characterized by mistrust and competition (Urbański et al., 2024). For example, Kaur (2023) found in her study that emotional exhaustion, a key component of burnout, is more likely to be experienced by employees who hide knowledge.

It has been indicated by sector-specific studies that these dynamics are particularly pronounced in high-pressure industries like IT, restaurant services, and healthcare (Haque et al., 2016; Zehra, Ather, & Zehra, 2017; Zehra et al., 2017; Jose & Kaur, 2023). Perhaps, it could be argued that in these sectors, a fertile ground for both knowledge hiding and occupational stress is created by the

combination of high job demands and a competitive work environment. Some of the prominent findings from the extracted literature are presented below in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of Key Findings

No.	Key Concepts	Reference
1.	Gender dynamics influences knowledge hiding and stress in high-pressure industries.	Urbański et al. (2024)
2.	Knowledge hiding is a deliberate act influenced by interpersonal and organizational factors in diverse sectors.	Connelly & Zweig (2015)
3.	Stress triggers knowledge hiding, and knowledge hiding worsens stress. They compete to impact employee performance negatively in distinct service sectors.	Haque (2024)
4.	Ethical leadership reduces knowledge hiding by fostering trust and relational capital.	Abdullah et al. (2019)
5.	Occupational stress reduces employee performance and increases burnout.	Kaur (2023).
6.	IT sector male employees in comparison to female employees experience higher stress due to job demands.	Haque et al. (2016)
7.	Workplace incivility increases knowledge hiding and employee cynicism.	Aljawarneh & Atan (2018)
8.	Knowledge hiding stifles innovation and reduces organizational performance.	Labafi (2017)
9.	Gender differences in stress levels are prevalent in male-dominated industries.	Faizan & Haque (2019)
10.	Knowledge hiding negatively impacts creativity in politicized work environments.	Malik et al. (2019)

Source: *authors' illustration based on secondary studies*

As evident in Table 1, knowledge hiding and stress significantly impact performances in different sectors. Thus, the literature at hand has confirmed that the consequences of knowledge hiding and occupational stress are often negatively affecting employees, their performance and their well-being.

Research Methodology

This systematic review adheres to the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines to ensure transparency, reproducibility, and rigor. The methodology is structured into four key phases: (1) Search Strategy, (2) Study Selection and Eligibility Criteria, (3) Data Extraction and Synthesis, and (4) Quality Assessment.

Search Strategy

Relevant studies were identified through a comprehensive search conducted across multiple academic databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, PubMed, and Google Scholar. Combinations of keywords such as were included in the search terms:

- "Knowledge withholding" OR "Knowledge hiding"
- "Workplace stress" OR "Occupational stress"
- "Organizational outcomes" OR "Employee performance"

- "Industry-specific" OR "Sector-specific differences"

Study Selection and Eligibility Criteria

A total of 1,250 articles were yielded by the initial search, which were screened based on titles and abstracts. Duplicates and irrelevant studies were removed, and 350 articles were left for full-text review. Table 2 reflect inclusion and exclusion criteria employed in this study.

Table 2: Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria	**Exclusion Criteria**
Empirical Studies - only studies with quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods designs were included. Focus on Knowledge Hiding and Occupational Stress - studies had to explicitly examine knowledge hiding, occupational stress, or their interplay. Peer-Reviewed Journals - only articles published in reputable, peer-reviewed journals were considered. Clear Methodology and Findings - studies had to provide sufficient detail on their research design, sample, and results. Sector-Specific Insights - studies that explored sector-specific differences (e.g., IT, healthcare, education) were prioritized.	Non-Empirical Studies - editorials, opinion pieces, and theoretical papers were excluded. Non-English Publications - studies not published in English were excluded to ensure consistency in interpretation. Insufficient Methodological Rigor - studies with unclear methodologies or insufficient data were excluded. Irrelevant Topics - studies not related to knowledge hiding, occupational stress, or employee outcomes were excluded.

Source: *authors' illustration*

After applying these criteria, 130 studies were selected for inclusion in the review. The search was further refined using Boolean operators (AND, OR) function, and filters were applied to include only peer-reviewed articles published in English between 2010 and 2024. The inclusion of recent and relevant studies was ensured while it was ensured that scope remains manageable within this time frame.

Data Extraction and Synthesis

Data extraction was conducted using a standardized form that included the following fields:

- Study details: Author(s), year, journal, title
- Methodology: Research design, country, sample size, sector
- Key variables: Antecedents, outcomes, and consequences of knowledge hiding and occupational stress
- Major findings: Key insights and sector-specific differences

Thematic analysis was used to synthesize the extracted data and identify recurring themes and patterns. Three main themes were identified from the findings: (1) antecedents and consequences of knowledge hiding, (2) causes and outcomes of occupational stress, and (3) the interplay between knowledge hiding and occupational stress.

Bibliometric Analysis

To provide a comprehensive overview of the included studies, a bibliometric analysis was conducted. Table 3 summarizes the key characteristics of the studies, including publication trends, geographical distribution, and sector-specific focus.

Table 3: Bibliometric Analysis of Included Studies

Category	Details	Number of Studies	Percentage
Publication Year	2010–2015	25	19.2%
	2016–2020	45	34.6%
	2021–2024	60	46.2%
Geographical Region	North America	40	30.8%
	Europe	35	26.9%
	Asia	30	23.1%
	Other (Africa, South America, Oceania)	25	19.2%
Sector Focus	IT and Technology	40	30.8%
	Healthcare	30	23.1%
	Education	20	15.4%
	Manufacturing	15	11.5%
	Other (Finance, Retail, etc.)	25	19.2%
Research Design	Quantitative	90	69.2%
	Qualitative	25	19.2%
	Mixed Methods	15	11.5%

Source: *authors' illustration based on secondary studies*

Quality Assessment

The Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT) designed to evaluate the methodological rigor of quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods research was used to evaluate the quality of the included studies. Analytical rigor, data collection techniques, and sampling strategy were among the factors used to score each study. Low-scoring studies were eliminated to guarantee the credibility, reliability, and validity of the results.

Findings and Discussions

The findings of the systematic review are presented in this section. It is organized into three main themes: (1) Antecedents and Consequences of Knowledge Hiding, (2) Causes and Outcomes of Occupational Stress, and (3) The Interplay Between Knowledge Hiding and Occupational Stress. The themes are supported by evidence from the included studies, and clarity is provided through summaries presented in tables.

Antecedents and Consequences of Knowledge Hiding

A range of individual, interpersonal, and organizational factors influence knowledge hiding. The key antecedents and consequences identified in the literature are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4: Antecedents and Consequences of Knowledge Hiding

Category	Key Findings	Supporting Studies
Individual Antecedents	Personality traits (e.g., neuroticism, Machiavellianism) increase knowledge hiding.	Demirkasımoğlu (2015); Connelly & Zweig (2015)

Interpersonal Antecedents	Workplace incivility and lack of trust are significant predictors of knowledge hiding.	Aljawarneh & Atan (2018); Abdullah et al. (2019)
Organizational Antecedents	Perceived organizational politics and unethical leadership foster knowledge hiding.	Labafi (2017); Malik et al. (2019)
Consequences	Knowledge hiding reduces team cohesion, innovation, and organizational performance. Employees who hide knowledge experience guilt and reduce job satisfaction.	Connelly & Zweig (2015); Labafi (2017) Haque (2024); Urbański et al. (2024)

Source: *authors' illustration-based research findings*

Excessive workloads and a lack of work-life balance are the most reported causes of occupational stress, which is a widespread problem in many industries (Kaur, 2023; Haque et al., 2018; Zaidi, 2022). Stress is particularly experienced by employees in high-pressure industries, such as IT and healthcare, due to the demanding nature of their work (Haque et al., 2016; Zehra et al., 2017). Severe outcomes of stress are observed, affecting both mental health and organizational performance. Burnout, anxiety, and depression are caused by stress, which not only harms employees but also results in increased absenteeism and turnover (Kaur & Haque, 2024; Faizan & Zehra, 2016; Zaidi, 2022). The need for stress management programs to be implemented by organizations and the promotion of work-life balance is underscored by these findings.

The Interplay Between Knowledge Hiding and Occupational Stress

Knowledge hiding and occupational stress have a complicated and reciprocal relationship. The key findings of this interplay are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5: Interplay Between Knowledge Hiding and Occupational Stress

Category	**Key Findings**	**Supporting Studies**
Stress as a Trigger	High stress levels increase knowledge hiding as a coping mechanism	Haque (2024); Urbański et al. (2024)
Knowledge Hiding as a Stressor	Knowledge hiding creates a toxic work environment, exacerbating stress.	Connelly & Zweig (2015); Labafi (2017)
Sector-Specific Differences	High-pressure sectors (e.g., IT, healthcare) experience stronger effects.	Haque et al. (2016); Kaur (2023)

Source: *authors' illustration based-research findings*

The results show that 'knowledge hiding' and 'occupational stress' are correlated in both directions. Employees who are under stress may conceal information because they are more concerned with protecting themselves than collaborating and prioritizing work to be effective and efficient (Haque, 2024). However, by creating a hostile and toxic workplace resulting from professional rivalry, and mistrust. Additionally, knowledge hiding makes stress worse (Connelly & Zweig, 2015). In high-pressure industries like IT, restaurant business and healthcare, where work expectations are high and resources are frequently few, such phenomenon i.e., knowledge hiding and occupational stress more noticeable (Haque et al., 2016; Zehra et al., 2017; Jose & Kaur, 2023). Gender dynamics, for instance, significantly exacerbate this linkage by women in male-dominated businesses. There are reports that higher levels of stress and knowledge hiding (Urbański et al., 2024).

Sector-Specific Insights

Knowledge hiding and occupational stress were found to have significant sector-specific differences in the prevalence and impact. These findings are summarized in Table 6.

Table 6: Sector-Specific Insights

Sector	Key Findings	Supporting Studies
IT and Technology	High levels of stress and knowledge hiding due to competitive work environments.	Haque et al. (2016); Labafi (2017)
Healthcare	Stress and knowledge hiding are prevalent due to high job demands and emotional labor.	Kaur (2023); Faizan & Haque (2019)
Education	Moderate levels of stress and knowledge hiding, often linked to bureaucratic pressures.	Ofoegbu & Nwadiani (2006); Demirkasımoğlu (2015)
Manufacturing	Stress is driven by physical demands, while knowledge hiding is less prevalent.	Kumasey et al. (2014); Abdullah et al. (2019)

Source: *authors' illustration-based research findings*

The need for tailored interventions is highlighted by sector-specific differences. For example, knowledge hiding and stress may be reduced in the IT industry by promoting a collaborative culture and providing stress management resources (Haque et al., 2016; Faizan & Zehra, 2016). Improving work-life balance and addressing emotional labor are crucial in the healthcare industry (Zehra et al., 2017; Zaidi, 2022; Kaur, 2023). These findings highlight how crucial context-specific tactics are used to successfully addressing these problems.

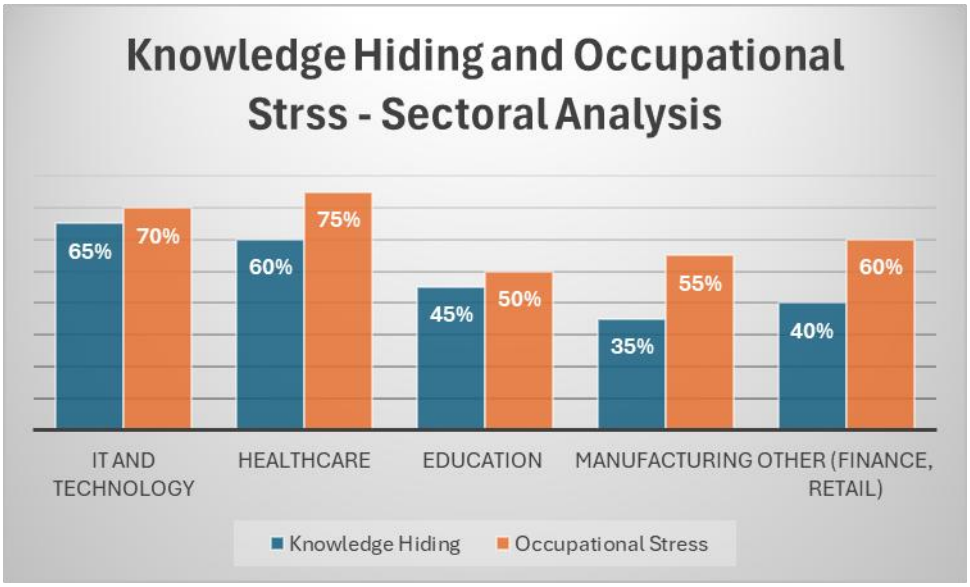

Figure 1: *Comparison of Knowledge Hiding and Occupational Stress - Sectoral Analysis.*

The graph compares knowledge hiding and occupational stress across different sectors (Figure 1). It reveals that sectors such as IT and technology, healthcare, and others (finance, retail) experience higher occupational stress rather than knowledge hiding. The education sector has less difference between that is only 5% (as knowledge hiding is 45% while occupational stress is 50%).

Manufacturing has the lowest, indicating more openness and a less stressful work environment.

It could be argued based on the evidence at hand that in comparison to knowledge hiding, occupational stress has severe more impact and visibility across distinct sectors. Interestingly, recent studies of Haque (2024) and Urbański et al. (2024) found that stress could be a biggest contributor towards developing knowledge hiding tendencies. Overall, the trend shows that higher occupational stress may contribute to increased knowledge hiding.

Conclusion and Recommendations

To investigate the relationship between knowledge hiding and occupational stress across various industries, this systematic review synthesized data from 130 studies. In addition to highlighting the negative impacts of knowledge hiding on employee well-being and organizational performance, the review identified key antecedents of this behavior. As evident, organizational politics, unethical leadership, and workplace toxic environment.

Our study concluded that occupational stress identified as both a cause and an effect of knowledge hiding as it creates a vicious cycle, particularly noticeable in high-pressure industries such as IT, financial sector, restaurants, and healthcare. Based on sector-specific differences, interventions must be customized to address the unique challenges faced by workers in different industries and sectors. This study also concludes that to reduce stress and knowledge hiding, organizations must promote a culture of trust, ethical leadership, and work-life balance.

This review has several limitations despite its significant contributions. First, relevant research published in other languages-have been excluded, as only English-language studies were included. Those excluded studies might have something critical and invaluable that has been omitted. Second, bias may have been introduced, as many of the included studies rely on self-reported data. Third, the systematic review may have missed important insights from industry reports, white papers, or grey literature, as it primarily focused on peer-reviewed academic publications. Lastly, most of the studies are cross-sectional, which limits our ability to make causal conclusions about the relationship between knowledge hiding and occupational stress. Perhaps, longitudinal studies might have given more in-depth insight about magnitude of relationship.

Based on the research limitations, the following recommendations are made:

- Future studies should consider longitudinal designs to explore the causal relationships between knowledge hiding and occupational stress.
- Cross-cultural comparisons are needed to understand how these phenomena vary across different cultural and organizational contexts.
- Research should investigate the role of emerging technologies, such as AI, in mitigating or exacerbating knowledge hiding and stress.

For practitioners, the following recommendations are made:

- To reduce knowledge hiding and foster collaboration, organizations should prioritize relational social capital and ethical leadership.
- stress management initiatives like mindfulness training and flexible work schedules, particularly in high-pressure industries like IT, restaurant, healthcare, and financial sectors should be the prime focus
- To address certain difficulties, sector-specific measures should be created, such as

tackling emotional labor in healthcare and lowering bureaucratic demands in education.

For policymakers, the following is recommended:

- At the organizational and national levels, policies supporting mental health and work-life balance should be promoted.
- Sector-specific guidelines should be developed to address the unique stressors faced by employees in different industries.

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Occupational Stress and Performance of Employees: Data from Banking Sector of Canada

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Abstract
This study focuses on how occupational stress affects employee performance in Vancouver's banking sector. A standardized questionnaire was used to collect data from 200 banking professionals to investigate how important stressors, such as job insecurity, workload, inadequate communication, and a lack of managerial support, affect workplace efficiency. Using statistical analysis, the data show that occupational stress considerably reduces employee productivity, resulting in higher absenteeism, decreased job satisfaction, and lower overall performance. While mild stress can be motivating, excessive stress has a negative influence on both mental and physical health, reducing job performance. The study indicates that proactive stress management techniques, such as supportive workplace policies, mental health programs, and effective communication frameworks, are critical to creating a healthier and more productive workforce.

Keywords: *Occupational stress, employee performance, banking sector*

JEL Classification: J28, J28, M12, M54

Introduction

Overview

Occupational stress is typically observed at workplace (Urbański et al., 2024), but what is stress? Stress often defined in negative term (Stranks, 2005). It is an emotional and physical pressure that manifests as anger, frustration, or anxiety. It might occur in any situation when an individual finds it challenging or demanding. Stress is broadly divided into two categories known as distress and eustress (Faizan & Haque, 2019; Kaur, 2023; Kaur & Haque, 2024). Distress (stressors) are negative and can affect people's physical health in a long run such as heart attack, headache, stomach issues, and so forth (Sharmeen et al., 2023).

Having job interview, getting speed ticket, and having presentation are examples of acute stressors. In contrast, eustress is normal and reasonable stress which positively affect health, motivation, performance, and well-being (Faizan & Haque, 2019). Promotion and vacation are considered as eustress. Occupational stress seems to be part of modern work, and it is considered as stressors. 75% of Americans believe their jobs are more stressful than that of past generations. And this can be directly related to several factors, from the position held to the company's relationship with its employees (Dunn, 2020). Stress is the typical reaction of the human body and mind to fear, real or just perceived (Piotrowski & Hollar, 2019). And occupational stress, one of the major causes of mental illness, is stress arising from all stimuli in the work environment (Dunn, 2020). Given this, Haque & Aston (2016), in their research with IT professionals, state that there is a direct relationship between occupational stress and employees' organizational commitment, even in situations of contrasting economies. However, in their study, they didn't analyze the correlation between performance and stress to understand the level of performance of these same employees and how much occupational stress is related to it.

According to our understanding, performance is a culturally formed concept. It is the reaffirmation of itself, being the establishment of what, in what form and when a job should be performed, so it is to be expected that in different cultures, the performance levels are varied. However, in Haque et al. (2016) work, similar results were observed in terms of commitment in different economies, raising the question of the same trend regarding the performance of these employees.

The study was conducted through secondary data analysis of a descriptive survey from Pandey (2020) with bank employees of different positions and associations in the United Kingdom. A bibliographic analysis of the latest publications on the subject was made, seeking findings that deal with occupational stress and employee performance. All definitions and correlations were analyzed and listed throughout the article to draw conclusions about the problem found.

Nowadays, anxiety and strain are the most important and crucial elements for companies in different sectors, as it sheds light on what can be a source of loss of performance for their workforce in a stressful environment (Faizan et al., 2022; Kaur, 2023; Kaur & Haque, 2024). It should also be of great use in academia for students and professors from business and management schools. It brings a topic that can be worked on in the classroom, emphasizing the search for real solutions with a theoretical basis.

Stress can be either useful or harmful to job performance. It depends on the level of the stress, if the level of the stress is low, job challenges become low, and it prevents to perform better. As stress increases steadily, job performance eventually tends to increase since stress aids individuals to perform better at work. It helps them to tackle the barriers and challenges they face at work. However, at some point when stress reaches its maximum saturation point, it effects employees' performance and ability. When stress passes the saturation point, it carries anxiety and shows no sign of improvement in job performance. Lastly, job performance begins to decline due to high stress level. When anxiety rises, employees are not able to decide, and they lose their ability to cope. Moreover, their behavior and attitude are inconsistent with their co-workers and their mood easily gets changed. When anxiety increases and it reaches breaking point, employees are upset and mentally overwhelmed and they completely break down. Their performance reduces to zero and absenteeism increases significantly and eventually they will resign from job, or they will be fired by their employer.

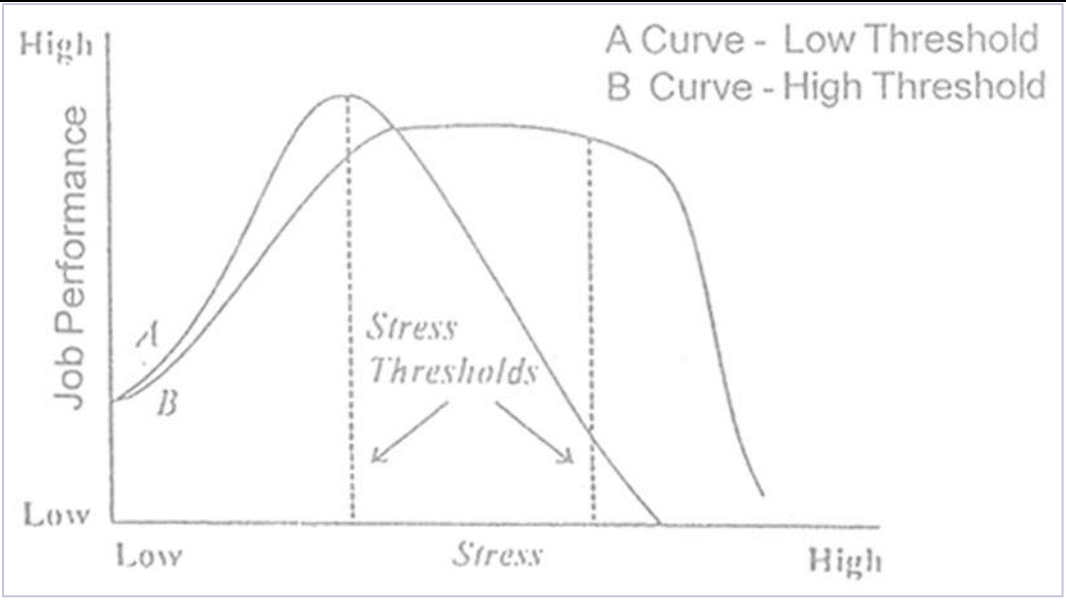

Figure 1: *Relationship between stress and job performance (Akrani, 2011)*

Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between job performance and stress level. As it is shown in the graph, stress should not be very low or high; however, it must be in a range that individuals can handle anxiety and performance level (Akrani, 2011; Jaafar, 2021). A controlled stress which is within limits is always advantageous and productive than an uncontrolled one. Managers should create an environment for their employees free of stress and anxiety. Furthermore, management should study and monitor stress level of individuals at the workplace and requirement changes and adjustments must be made to control and minimize stress. Cooperation, kindness, respect, caring, support, good attitude, and discipline create stress free, friendly, welcoming, pleasant, productive, and happy environment for employees. Additionally, emotional aspects play a significant role and its essential in the workplace to be understood. Since no matter how individuals are intelligent, it is emotions that drives them to do their best and put their 100% effort.

Many factors cause stress and anxiety at work such as work type, salary, job insecurity, poor communication, work overload, lack of motivation, lack of management support, poor performance evaluation and appraisal system. Figure 1 also illustrates association between work stress and employees' performance. Therefore, this paper aims to deepen the theme of occupational stress, this time seeking to clarify whether there is a relationship between this and the performance of employees in the management sector. And it also tries to identify the role of occupational stress in the performance of employees in the service area.

Literature Review

Recently, there are lots of researchers scrutinizing to understand the occupational stress on organization performance. Organizations and employees always are struggling with managing stress at workplaces, and they cannot access an accurate understanding of the occupational stress nature. It causes employees to increase job dissatisfaction and costs for health care. Job performance is one of the organizational outputs that is influenced by occupational stress.

Employees' performance at the workplace is a significant concern for organizations. If employees have high performance, the organizations will be successful (Williams & Cooper, 1998; Popa et al., 2018).

Most of the previous articles are about the influence of stress but talk about the stress on specific aspects that impact the job. The researchers did not find any articles that have a broad perspective of this subject. As a result, it's critical to grasp what defines work performance and the many aspects of a job that are influenced by stress (Nisar & Rasheed, 2019). Occupational stress is caused by the needs of the task and the many responses that everyone has to those expectations. Stress is a state that people are exposed to possibilities, barriers. While the outcomes are critical, they cannot be predicted (Motowidlo, Packard & Manning, 1986; Chen et al., 2022). In this essay, we will research different methods to analyze occupational stress and its effects on organizations.

Different definitions of stress and work stress

According to Burman & Goswami (2018), to clarify the exact understanding of stress and work stress, here, there have been shown the definitions based on authors from 2001 to 2013. Table 1 explains different definition of stress at workplace.

Table 1: Different Definitions of Stress and Work Stress

Sl. No.	Stress definitions
1	Dolan et al (2001) stated, work stress is transitional arousal state between objective stressors and strain where strain is reaction to the condition of stress (Kruglanski et al., 2023; Floyd, 2024).
2	Kaur (2023) explained occupational stress is any discomfort which is felt and perceived at a personal level and triggered by instances, events or situations that are too intense and frequent in nature to exceed a person's coping capabilities and resources to handle them adequately.
3	Tran et al. (2022) mentioned that it is as an inability of an individual to meet the demands from job due to the imbalance in the 'person-environment' perceptions. It is the situation where individuals' job performance, both physical and mental health, is affected poorly (Haque, 2018).
4	Job stress as a work-related psychological pressure and a worker's ability to respond and grip the specific situation at workplace skillfully (Chen & Silverthorne, 2008; Padmanabhan, 2021).
5	Occupational stress can be defined as the experience of unpleasant negative emotions such as tension, anxiety, frustration, anger and depression resulting from aspects of work (Salami, 2010; Liu et al., 2022).
6	Yan & Xie (2016) defined stress as a series of physiological, psychological and behavioral responses due to the continuing effects of one or more stressors on individuals in an organization.

Source: *author's illustration based on secondary review*

Theories and Models

There are theories and models that previous papers follow to show how stress affects employees' performance. Using a random sample of workers in a specific unit in an organization is one of these theories. Based on this model, occupational stress influences employees in many ways, and it causes employees to these consequences such as cognitive, behavioral, emotional, and physical. Hence, the study suggested ways that managers and employees should manage their stress effectively at the workplace. In that case, there have been lots of ways to remedy these consequences, such as shock therapy, Yoga, Meditation. (Jallow, 2020). The mentioned definitions of stress confirm what previous researchers have observed, and the purpose of stress is vague. Moreover, it seems that most researchers classify stress into two categories: positive and negative.

According to Ongori & Evans Agolla (2021), positive stress causes employees to motivate them to have high performance, while negative stress causes employees to reduce their performance. Moreover, the root of stress was shown in the workplace to work too much that the consequences would be a bad time to do their tasks, stressful environment and relationship problems with their partners or bosses or colleagues. The National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), for instance, created an innovative model that shows the relation between job stress and health. This model considered the list of causes of pressure at the workplace such as environment, the conflict of workers for their jobs, tasks ambiguity, the ambiguity of the future, and eagerness to develop at the workplace as well as shift work. Gundona et al. (2023) argued that customer engagement can increase brand performance. However, it is unclear if it creates any additional stress for employees. Haque et al. (2016) had argued with each other because of the root of stress that includes inadequate support from managers, absence of communication and encouragement, isolation feel or low level of quality training. They considered in one organization, employees should have contact with each other, and they should be allowed to cooperate in deciding for the company. Lack of participation with employees causes them to get stressed at the workplace.

Work Setting

Previous papers explored the theories and models of the effects of stress on job performance, not to solve or focus on how organizations can cope with it. This paper has shown that managers in different organizations must develop various interventions to control occupational stress. The general approach to consulting people at the workplace is not efficient and enough to handle their stress. So, it needs to change this approach to manage stress and increase performance at the workplace. The results show that when the workload is increased, or people are uncertain about their future as well as poor communication in organizations, occupational stress is the leading causes, and the occupational stress has an adverse impact on the organization, such as increasing cost of health care, the employee resigns and reduce the performance. To cope with stress, organizations can help their employees with a counselor to identify the root of their stress in each person to reach a pattern for recognizing the person's behavior in an organization.

Hypothesis

In recent years, because of spreading problems, people are struggling with many problems in their lives especially stress at the workplace. With many solutions, organizations can make it easy for them to have employees with high performance. However, in the context of present study, banking sector is the focus. Hence, the hypothesis is developed:

H1: *Work stressors significantly affect employees' performance*

Summary of literature

As we can see, all organizations are struggling with occupational stress at workplaces. Employees want to work in a peaceful place to have high performance, so organizations can take advantage of high-performance employees. It is worth mentioning that organizations should provide their employees with golden opportunities such as counselors to clarify the root of personal problems of people before working and then try to support them to have a perfect environment without stress to increase the performance of employees. These counselors, with questionnaires, can find the root of the personal stress of each person to support them before working.

Research Methodology

The qualitative approach was used in this study, and a survey was conducted by sending a questionnaire to the bank employees who worked to explain the characteristics of the variables of interest, the frequency of their occurrence, and the categories of things that caused them stress. It has also been successful in establishing a link between workplace stress and employees' performance using the correlation study methodology.

By using online forms, structured questions were sent to workers of different commercial banks in Vancouver who had previously answered them. There was a total of 200 answers received. In similar research performed by Derek and Jessi (2009), a total of 120 samples were utilized in the investigation. More than 120 sample sizes were utilized in this research, which was conducted in the United Kingdom. The investigation was carried out from the perspective of the workers.

Primary data was gathered via an online questionnaire, which included both open-ended and closed-ended questions and was created with the help of Google forms. Secondary data was acquired through interviews and focus groups. It was decided to utilize the quantitative approach to collect information to investigate the stress-related issues that bankers face as well as the variables that play a key part in generating tension among the bank's employees. The results of the questionnaire were examined with the help of the SPSS program.

Descriptive and correlation research were used for this study. As it is aimed to describe a social problem and compared the variables of the research. As previously mentioned, descriptive research was used to depict an issue that already exist in a group of people. To better understand the causes of stress levels on the workplace, we used this method to describe different variables affecting individual's performance due to high stress levels. Additionally, a correlation method was also added to the research aiming at the comparison of genders between men and females.

The statistical techniques of frequency analysis, percentage analysis, and the mean were utilized to reach a conclusion about the variables that have a significant impact on stress levels and workers' performance levels. Using Likert scale questions, the mean of the responses was calculated to identify the variables that lead to worry. Apart from this research paper used and from which we collected data.

A sample of 200 questionnaires was collected among employees of different banks in Vancouver Canadathrough Google online forms. Approximately 5 to 6 papers were used to collect information.

Due to lack time and fund, the information used are collected from secondary data and google. Moreover, COVID-19 affected on collecting data and the information was gathered in an online questionnaire format or through telephone interview.

Table 2: Methods of Data Collection

Inclusion	Exclusion
Internet/ Google forms/ Library research	Longitudinal design
Secondary data	Manufacturing and other service sectors
Banking sector	Interviews
Cross-sectional design	Observation

Source: *author's illustration*

According to Bryman and Bell (2007), the following points represent the most important principles related to ethical considerations in dissertations:

- Participants should not be subjected to harm in any ways.
- Respect for dignity of research participants should be prioritised.
- Full consent should be obtained from the participants prior to the study.
- The protection of the privacy of participants must be ensured.
- Adequate level of confidentiality of the research data should be ensured.
- Anonymity of individuals and organisations participating in the research must be ensured.
- Any deception or exaggeration about the aims and subjective of the research must be ensured.
- Affiliations in any forms, sources of funding, as well as any possible conflicts of interests must be declared.
- Any type of communication in relation to the research should be done with honesty and transparency.
- Any time of misleading information, as well as representation of primary data findings in a biased way must be avoided.

Findings and Discussions

This section deals with the results we have found through above mentioned research methodology and the discussion of all those findings. The factors responsible for stress of employees their effect on employees. We have also discussed the effect of organizational culture on the performance of employees and how the culture of organization and its diversity affects the stress and pressure on the workforce.

The Levene's test was used to determine the equality of variation in the data, and the independent t-test was used to see if there was a relationship between gender and stress level. Pearson's matrix was developed to establish the relationship between variables affecting stress levels and employee productivity.

Table 3: Gender Representation

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	110	55%
Female	90	45%
Total	200	100%

Source: *Statistical test results*

Table 3 shows that male respondents outnumbered female respondents in terms of absolute numbers. As a result, the results of the research are applicable to both men and women.

Factors Contributing Stress

Banking is the most tiresome and difficult profession since they must deal with people daily, and the increasing level of competitiveness requires more effort and time. Finding the variables that are most responsible for the development of stress in the working environment is critical. In accordance with the opinion of banking workers, the elements in Table 4 are ranked in order of importance.

Table 4: Reasons Behind Stress

Problems	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Work Type	28	14%
Salary and Pay Scale	22	11%
Job Insecurity	30	15%
Poor Communication	28	14%
Work Overload	33	16.5%
Lack of Motivation	24	12%
Lack of Management Support	16	8%
Poor Performance Evaluation & Appraisal	15	7.5%
Others	4	2%
Total	**200**	**100%**

Source: *Statistical test results*

When reviewing several workplace stresses causes, work overload, lack of motivation, poor communication, and job uncertainty are the most prominent (Table 4).

Table 5: Level of Stress

Level of Stress	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Mild	50	25%
Moderate	57	28.5%
Severe	65	32.5%
Extreme	28	14%
Total	**200**	**100%**

Source: *Statistical test results*

75% percent of those surveyed in the Vancouver working in the banking sector reported having high stress levels at their place of work. Stressed employees were right behind. The large number that responded indicated that they were experiencing a significant stress level. This may be attributed to an increase in the need for more time and effort owing to the presence of more competition. Individuals who indicated moderate and low levels of stress reacted better to stress. This may mean that they had greater stress tolerance capacity, or it could mean that they didn't find other employment alternatives.

Table 6: Stress Factor

Stress Factors	**Mean**
Work Type	3.14
Salary and Pay Scale	3.71
Job Insecurity	3.46
Poor Communication	2.90
Work Overload	3.23
Lack of Motivation	3.53
Lack of Management Support	2.91
Poor Performance Evaluation & Appraisal System	4.20

Source: *Statistical test results*

Table 6 indicates that the Canadian banking sector suffers from many sources of stress, the most notable of which is an insufficient performance assessment and appraisal procedure. Similarly, the kind of work, income, and compensation, job security, lack of motivation, and a lack of communication and management assistance are all contributing factors to the work stress experienced by workers.

Table 7: Independent Sample Test Between Gender and Stress Level

		Levine's Test for Equality of Variances t-test for Equality of Means				
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Level of Stress	Equal Variances Assumed	1.139	.287	-1.408	198	.161
	Equal Variances not Assumed			-1.415	193.682	.159

Source: *Statistical test results*

According to Table 7, the p-value is 0.161. The p-value (that is, 0.161) is higher than the value of 0.05. It indicates that men and women do not have significantly different levels of stress.

Hypothesis Testing - Relationship between work stressors and employee performance

We reject the null hypothesis as we found that organizational culture and diversity has an impact on the organizational performance. According to research papers provided in the literature review, there exists a negative correlation between work stresses and the performance of organizations, namely in the commercial sectors of commerce, banking, and even education. To analyze the connection between work stresses and employee performance in the banking industry of Canada, the correlation coefficients has been computed in table 8.

Table 8: Relationship between Stress Factors and Poor Employees' Performance

Employee's Performance		
Work Type	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	-.463* .000
Salary Pay Scale	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	-.625* .000
Job Insecurity	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	-.524* .000
Poor Communication	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	-.447 .000
Work Overload	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	-.191* .000
Lack of Motivation	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	-.563* .000
Lack of Management Support	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	-.512* .000
Poor Performance Evaluation & Appraisal System	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	-.253 .000

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)*

Work stresses and employee performance are shown in Table 6. Workers are more likely to encounter workplace stresses when they perform poorly. When there is an increase in stress, it will lead to a decline in performance. A study found that salary and pay scale is the best predictor of performance. The only stressors with higher coefficients than those previously mentioned are workplace overload and an ineffective performance assessment and appraisal system. 1% stresses are substantial. Thus, the results of this research show that all stressors utilized in this study substantially and negatively impact employee performance.

Table 9: Correlation between Stress Level and Work Performance

		Stress Level	Poor Employees' Performance
Stress Level	Pearson Correlation Sig.	1	-.926** .000
Poor Employees' Performance	Pearson Correlation Sig.	-.926** .000	1

***Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)*

These figures demonstrate the high negative correlation between stress levels and bank staff performance. correlation coefficient is 0.926, and p-value is less than significance threshold of .000, meaning that there is a very high degree of significance (.05). It may therefore be said that stress levels raise the danger of reducing the work productivity.

This study examined the effect of different factors that cause stress in employees on the bank industry of Vancouver, Canadaand their influence on staff's performance. One of crucial reason behind employees' stress is that staff were overwhelmed and overload at work and it was followed by job insecurity, weak communication skills, and type of work. It makes sense since the other research analysis that was collected from Canadian banks had almost the same result since employees work as a burden not as a chance to learn and improve themselves. The result illustrates that performance of staff reduced due to lack of job security, low salary, and role conflict Vijayan (2018). Moreover, result shows most of respondents were under moderate and severe pressure and a few felt their stress was extreme. Eventually people who are under extreme level of anxiety might leave their job and people who had moderate level of pressure might still have higher capability toward stress and anxiety or they may not find another job. Furthermore, financial sector has a higher level of strain among all other jobs since it is in a competition with other banking sectors. They try to provide services to customers and achieve customer satisfaction and avoid losing their clients. Therefore, employees should come up with new ideas and services to gain and sustain their clients.

Conclusion and Recommendations

According to different research papers there are many reasons linked with stress and pressure at work environment. These factors are organization culture, leadership style, relationship between employee and employer, management style, work environment, job content and tasks, lack of support, and lack of respect could cause stress at work; thus, staff are not able to work properly and its effects on their performance. Pandey (2020) stated that stress is a universal element, and all jobs have their own pressure on staff. He added that bank sectors are under pressure more than any other employees. This section explains briefly about the results and findings as well as what was the limitation and constraints of this project.

In conclusion, appraisal system, weak evaluation, salary, lack of motivation, lack of job security,

and work type have effect on staff's performance. For instance, if employees are overwhelmed and overloaded with different tasks at work, they will get nervous and will not be able to perform well. Moreover, when staff have poor communication and they are not sure about their job, their performance reduces ultimately. It has been confirmed that employment stress is the essential predictor of employees' performance. Therefore, stress management is crucial at the workplace and must be monitored and observed since it will directly affect the mental and physical health of employees and staff. The factors which were mentioned above are the causes of stress at work and it has been recognized globally. Independent t-test does not include the gender difference in the experiment that is associated with level of stress. However, gender and age are the other two factors which might be consider in the future analysis. Overall, extreme stress level reduces performance of employees in the banking sector.

The recommendations proposed is to solve the problems like lack of focus, strained interactions, poor time management, and health effects. The most widely known challenges causing job stress are demanding supervisors, malicious colleagues, rebels, angry clients, unstable conditions, and a continual load. Using appreciation programs for personnel, for example, promoting open communications, offering mental and physical health benefits, bringing meditation classes, providing time off pay, encouraging employees to take breaks; working at company offsites; bringing some diversions to the office; and giving a yearly holiday are useful to reduce stress level (Hoppe, 2017).

Hoppe (2017) explained, the managers can use different classes or tools like Reboot to provide a good and productive approach for their team and management to work with their staff. Another way is giving a benefits package to the employees. Although it might be costly to provide access to a benefits package initially, it can have many rewards. In addition, employees will be better off and more loyal to the firm with access to health insurance. Also, managers can bring a coach for meditation regularly in the workplace. The boss and the staff can use the meditation class to have more concentration and patience, positively affecting employees and the manager's performance. Finally, managers should pay their employees when they are in their two weeks off because if they pay this money, staff will take their vacation in a better situation without stress and come back to work in a better mood.

Moreover, employees will be healthier and more beneficial when they use their vacation time. Managers should ask their staff to take regular breaks, which can help them recover themselves and work effectively. Offer your employees tea on the balcony with you or watch a movie to moderate the stress. Allowing your staff to participate in team games since who can work in a team game can work in a team works. Managers should let their personnel have a flexible schedule which helps them to be more relaxed mentally. Better managers may consider workdays remotely with apps like using Slack and Google Hangouts. Managers should inform their employees that the company has a policy that supports the staff in exact situations like pregnancy, sickness, taking care of children, and family death. If managers don't take a vacation, most of the employees will follow them, and they won't take their holidays. So, it is better to take an annual holiday as a manager of the company.

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Authentic Leadership in the UK Retail Sector: Exploring Employee Experiences and the Emergence of Authentic Followership

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Abstract

This phenomenological study explores employees' experiences of authentic leadership within the UK retail industry, addressing the gap in understanding how authentic leadership influences followers. Rooted in the principle of 'Know thyself,' authentic leadership emphasizes self-awareness, relational transparency, and moral values to foster positive work environments, employee well-being, and organizational sustainability. The research investigates the perceptions of 14 employees working under authentic leaders, using in-depth interviews to uncover their professional and personal experiences. Four key themes emerged: Genuine and Positive Attitude, Building Informal Relations, Formal Relations, and Professional Aptitude. These themes highlight how authentic leadership promotes honesty, trust, and strong interpersonal relationships, ultimately contributing to authentic followership. The study proposes a model of authentic followership based on these findings, aligning with existing theories while introducing new dimensions. A comprehensive review of leadership literature underscores the importance of leaders guiding followers toward shared goals while prioritizing their well-being and empowerment. The findings suggest that authentic leadership enhances organizational vibrancy and productivity, with implications for both private and public sectors. Further research is recommended to explore authentic leadership experiences across diverse industries and cultural contexts, providing deeper insights into its transformative potential for employees and organizations alike.

Keywords: *Authentic leadership, sustainability, followership, organizational vibrancy*

JEL Classification: M12, D23, L12

Introduction

This study explores authentic leadership qualitatively through the lens of followers' perceptions, using a phenomenological approach (Moustakas, 1994) with an interpretive perspective. Transcendental phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994; Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Yamoah & Haque, 2022) is applied to understand employees' lived experiences, focusing on setting aside preconceived ideas (epoche) to uncover the true meaning of phenomena. The research aims to

identify a leadership style based on authenticity and moral values that foster authentic followership and job satisfaction in fast-paced work environments.

Leadership is defined as the ability to influence people toward achieving goals, with credibility rooted in ethical and transparent practices (Hughes et al., 2010; Haque et al., 2015). Authentic leadership, a growing area of interest, emphasizes self-awareness, relational transparency, and moral values to create positive work environments and employee well-being (George, 2003; Avolio et al., 2004). However, limited qualitative research exists on employees' experiences under authentic leadership, particularly in the UK retail sector. This study addresses this gap by exploring how authentic leadership influences employees and fosters authentic followership.

The study focuses on the UK retail industry, a vital sector for the economy, employing millions and contributing significantly to GDP. The research is significant as it provides qualitative insights into authentic leadership, a less-explored area, and proposes a model for authentic followership development. It benefits academics, practitioners, and professionals by enhancing understanding of how authentic leadership impacts employee experiences and organizational outcomes.

The aim is to explore employees' experiences under authentic leadership, understand the context of these experiences, and investigate the development of authentic followership. The study seeks to contribute to the literature by providing qualitative insights and proposing strategies for improving workplace practices.

The research questions focus on understanding employees' experiences under authentic leaders and identifying components of authentic leadership that lead to authentic followership. A qualitative, phenomenological approach is used, with in-depth interviews conducted with 14 participants from the UK retail industry. The study aims to contribute to the literature by providing qualitative insights into authentic leadership and proposing a model for authentic followership development.

Literature Review

Authentic leadership has gained significant attention in recent years, with key contributions from scholars like William L. Gardner, Bruce J. Avolio, Remus Ilies, and Bill George. These authors have developed foundational models that are widely referenced in literature. However, there is a noticeable gap in recent developments, particularly in addressing current market dynamics and leadership practices. Gundona et al. (2023) argued that customer engagement can increase brand performance. However, is there any role of authentic leader in making customer engagement better or not, is still not clear. This study aims to fill this gap by exploring authentic leadership through the lens of followers' experiences, using a phenomenological approach.

Leadership: Definitions and Evolution

Leadership has been studied for over a century, with early theories like the Great Man Theory (Carlyle, 184) suggesting that leaders are born, not made. This theory was later challenged by Herbert Spencer (1860), who argued that leaders are shaped by social conditions (Luthans et al., 2021). Over time, leadership theories evolved, focusing on traits, behaviors, and situational factors. Key definitions include:

- Leadership as a process of influencing group activities toward goal achievement (Stogdill, 1974).
- Leadership as the ability to inspire and motivate followers (Bass, 1990).

- Leadership as a social influence process that supports and helps others achieve tasks (Chemers, 1997).

Despite numerous definitions, leadership remains a complex and context-dependent concept, with no universal agreement on its core attributes. Recent studies emphasize the importance of authenticity as a critical leadership trait, particularly in fostering trust and ethical behavior.

Development of Leadership Theories

Leadership theories have evolved from trait-based and behavioral approaches to more relational and transformational models. Key theories include:

- Trait Theory (1930s): Focused on innate qualities like emotional stability, conscientiousness, and extraversion (Luthans et al., 2021).
- Behavioral Theory (1940s-1950s): Emphasized learned behaviors and the importance of employee-oriented leadership (Luthans et al., 2021).
- Situational Theory (Hersey and Blanchard, 1969): Suggested that leadership style should adapt to the situation and followers' maturity levels.
- Transformational Leadership (Burns, 1978): Highlighted the role of leaders in inspiring and transforming followers through vision and moral values.

These theories laid the groundwork for modern leadership concepts, including authentic leadership, which integrates ethical, relational, and self-aware dimensions.

Authentic Leadership: Conceptual Foundations

Authentic leadership emerged in the early 2000s as a response to the need for ethical and transparent leadership practices. Key contributors include:

- Luthans and Avolio (2003): Introduced authentic leadership as a root construct rooted in positive psychology and self-awareness.
- George (2003): Emphasized the importance of authenticity, moral values, and self-discipline in leadership.
- Gardner et al. (2005): Proposed a model linking authentic leadership to follower development through self-awareness and self-regulation.

Authentic leadership is characterized by four key dimensions:

- Self-awareness: Understanding one's values, emotions, and impact on others.
- Relational transparency: Being open and honest in interactions.
- Balanced processing: Objectively analyzing information before making decisions.
- Internalized moral perspective: Acting in alignment with ethical standards.

These dimensions form the basis of authentic leadership models and have been widely adopted in research and practice.

Authentic Followership

Authentic leadership is closely linked to authentic followership, where followers develop trust and commitment through their leader's authenticity. Key studies include:

- Gardner et al. (2005): Highlighted the role of authentic leaders in fostering follower self-awareness and self-regulation.
- Leroy et al. (2015): Found that authentic leadership satisfies followers' basic psychological needs (competence, relatedness, autonomy), leading to higher job satisfaction and performance.
- Braun and Peus (2018): Emphasized the importance of authentic leaders in creating positive work environments and promoting employee well-being.

Despite these insights, authentic followership remains understudied, with limited research on how followers perceive and develop authenticity in response to their leaders.

Contemporary Research on Authentic Leadership

Recent studies have focused on the impact of authentic leadership on employee outcomes, particularly in the post-COVID-19 era. Key findings include:

- Baquero (2023): Found that authentic leadership constructs (relational transparency, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing) positively impact work engagement and trust in leaders.
- Mao et al. (2023): Demonstrated that authentic leadership enhances employee resilience during crises, mediated by trust and organizational identification.
- Towsen et al. (2020): Linked authentic leadership to psychological empowerment and work engagement in the mining sector.
- Duarte et al. (2021): Showed that authentic leadership improves employee performance through affective commitment and creativity.

While these studies provide valuable insights, they predominantly use quantitative methods and focus on established constructions, leaving room for qualitative exploration of followers' experiences and the development of new dimensions.

Gaps in Literature

Despite extensive research, several gaps remain:

- Lack of Qualitative Studies: Most research relies on quantitative methods, limiting deeper understanding of followers' lived experiences.
- Understudied Followership: Authentic followership has received less attention compared to authentic leadership.
- Context-Specific Research: Few studies explore authentic leadership in the retail sector, which plays a vital role in the economy.
- Post-COVID-19 Dynamics: The pandemic has reshaped workplace dynamics, yet there is limited research on how authentic leadership adapts to these changes.

This study addresses these gaps by using a qualitative, phenomenological approach to explore authentic leadership in the UK retail sector, focusing on followers' experiences and the development of authentic followership.

Research Methodology

Qualitative Research Methods

Qualitative research is widely used in social sciences to explore human experiences, behaviors, and social phenomena. Unlike quantitative methods, which rely on numerical data and statistical analysis, qualitative research focuses on understanding the "why" and "how" behind human actions. It employs methods such as interviews, observations, and content analysis to gather rich, detailed data (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). This study adopts a qualitative approach to explore employees' experiences under authentic leadership, as it allows for an in-depth understanding of their perceptions and lived experiences.

Phenomenological Research Design

Phenomenology, as proposed by Moustakas (1994), is the chosen research design for this study. It focuses on understanding the "lived experiences" of individuals and the meaning they attach to those experiences. This approach is particularly suited for exploring how employees perceive and experience authentic leadership in their workplace. Phenomenology involves:

- Epoche: Setting aside preconceived ideas and biases to understand the phenomenon through the participants' perspectives.
- Phenomenological Reduction: Analyzing the essence of participants' experiences by focusing on their descriptions.
- Horizontalizing: Identifying significant statements from participants' narratives and clustering them into themes.

This design allows the researcher to delve deeply into the participants' experiences, providing a holistic understanding of the phenomenon.

Research Paradigm and Philosophy

The study adopts an interpretivist research paradigm, which emphasizes understanding social phenomena through the subjective experiences of individuals. Interpretivism aligns with the study's goal of exploring employees' perceptions and experiences of authentic leadership. The research philosophy is guided by:

- Ontology: The belief that reality is socially constructed and varies based on individual experiences.
- Epistemology: The understanding that knowledge is gained through interpretation and interaction with participants.
- Axiology: The recognition of the researcher's values and biases, which are acknowledged and bracketed during the study.

This paradigm ensures that the research remains focused on understanding the subjective experiences of employees rather than seeking objective, general truths.

Data Collection

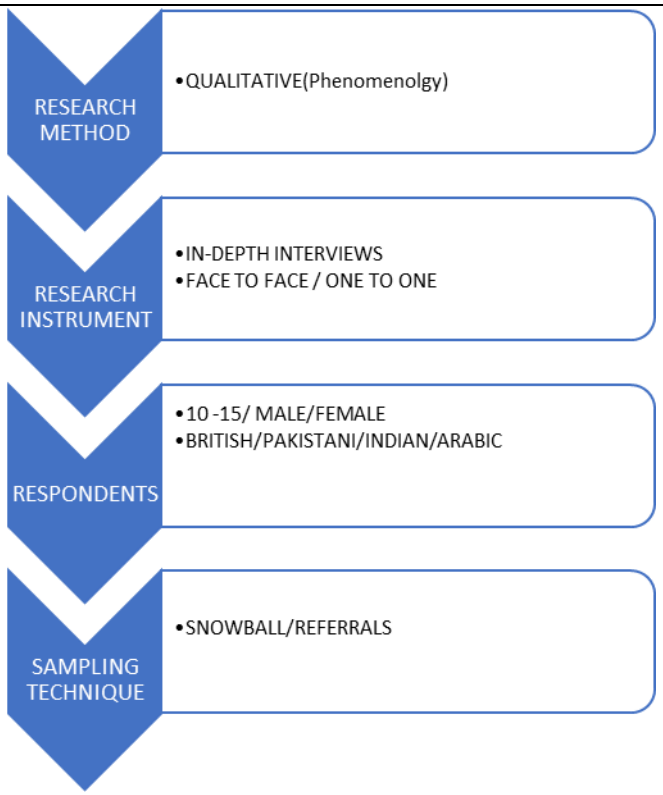


Figure 1: *author's illustration - data collection process*

Data was collected through in-depth interviews with 14 employees from the UK retail sector who had worked under authentic leaders. The interviews were semi-structured, allowing participants to share their experiences freely while ensuring key topics were covered. Each interview lasted 1-2 hours and was conducted in a natural setting to ensure participants felt comfortable and open. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis.

Sampling Technique

A non-probability sampling approach was used, combining snowball, purposive, and convenience sampling techniques. Participants were selected based on their experience working under authentic leaders and their willingness to share detailed narratives. The sample size was determined using thematic saturation, where no new themes emerged after 11 interviews, with three additional interviews confirming the saturation point.

Research Instrument and Pilot Testing

The primary research instrument was a semi-structured interview guide with open-ended questions. A pilot study was conducted with four employees from a similar retail setting to refine the questions and ensure clarity. The final interview guide focused on participants' experiences, perceptions, and the impact of authentic leadership on their professional and personal lives.

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed Moustakas' (1994) phenomenological approach, which includes:

- Epoche: Bracketing the researcher's biases and preconceptions.
- Phenomenological Reduction: Identifying significant statements from participants'

narratives.
- Horizontalizing: Clustering statements into themes and sub-themes.
- Imaginative Variation: Reflecting on the themes to uncover the essence of the participants' experiences.
- Thematic analysis was used to organize and interpret the data, with themes emerging from participants' descriptions of their experiences. The analysis process involved:
- Coding: Assigning labels to significant statements.
- Reduction and Elimination: Removing repetitive or irrelevant statements.
- Thematic Clustering: Grouping codes into broader themes.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to strict ethical guidelines, including:

- Informed Consent: Participants were fully informed about the study's purpose and their rights.
- Confidentiality: All data was anonymized, and participants' identities were protected.
- Voluntary Participation: Participants were free to withdraw at any time without consequences.
- Minimizing Harm: The research topic was non-sensitive, focusing on positive experiences, and participants were assured of their emotional and physical safety.

Triangulation

To ensure the study's validity and reliability, triangulation was employed by:

- Using multiple data sources (interviews, observations).
- Cross-checking findings with existing literature on authentic leadership.
- Ensuring consistency in data collection and analysis methods.

Summary of methodology

The qualitative, phenomenological approach adopted in this study provides a robust framework for exploring employees' experiences of authentic leadership. By focusing on the participants' lived experiences, the study aims to uncover the essence of authentic leadership and its impact on employees, contributing to both academic knowledge and practical insights for organizational leadership.

Findings and Discussions

The findings are categorized into four main themes based on the attributes of the manager's personality as perceived by employees. These themes reflect the manager's authenticity, relationship-building skills, professional aptitude, and leadership style.

Main Theme 1: Genuine and Positive Attitude

This theme reflects the manager's authentic and kind-hearted nature, characterized by politeness, honesty, and approachability.

Table 1: Responses about Genuine and Positive Attitude

Polite and Kind	"She always treats employees as family. She never speaks harshly, even

	if someone is wrong." (Participant 9)
	"He listens calmly and tries to make situations better. He is kindhearted and supportive." (Participant 2)
Honesty	"She is very honest with the company, her work, and her staff." (Participant 7)
	"He never hides anything. He always tells us the clear picture." (Participant 1)
Easily Approachable	"He always smiles and makes you feel safe. You never hesitate to approach him." (Participant 10)
	"She is always there to help, no matter the issue." (Participant 9)
	"He always smiles and makes you feel safe. You never hesitate to approach him." (Participant 10)
	"She is always there to help, no matter the issue." (Participant 9)

Source: *author's illustration about qualitative findings*

Participants consistently described their manager as kind, patient, and caring. Employees felt valued and supported, even when mistakes were made. Moreover, the manager's kindness created a stress-free and supportive work environment, fostering emotional connections with employees. Honesty was a key trait, with the manager being transparent and trustworthy. In addition to that, employees appreciated the manager's transparency, especially during challenging times like hour reductions or financial adjustments. The manager's friendly and welcoming demeanor made employees feel comfortable sharing personal and professional concerns. This approachability fostered trust and strong emotional bonds between the manager and employees.

Main Theme 2: Informal Relations

This theme highlights the manager's efforts to build relationships beyond formal duties, focusing on rewards, respect, flexibility, and personal support.

Table 2: Responses about information relations

Rewards and Perks	"He gave us gifts and appreciation for our efforts. It made us feel valued." (Participant 2)
Respect as a Key to Building Relationships	"He treats everyone equally, whether junior or senior. There's no discrimination." (Participant 9)
Flexibility Approach	"She always supports me with my schedule, especially with my kids." (Participant 7) "He treats everyone equally, whether junior or senior. There's no discrimination." (Participant 9)
Helping Employees with Personal Matters	"He financially helped me during a tough time. I'll never forget his kindness." (Participant 4)

Source: *author's illustration about qualitative findings*

Findings revealed that the manager recognized and rewarded employees' hard work, creating a motivating environment. The manager recognized and rewarded employees' hard work, creating a motivating environment. In addition to that, respect was central to the manager's interactions, ensuring equality and fairness. The manager accommodated employees' personal needs, such as health issues or family responsibilities. Lastly, the manager went beyond professional duties to

assist employees with personal challenges.

Main Theme 3: Formal Relations

This theme focuses on the manager's professional role, including problem-solving, empowering employees, and fostering a collaborative work environment.

Table 3: Responses about Formal Relations

Problem Solver	"She always finds solutions before problems escalate." (Participant 9)
Empowering Slow Learners	"She worked hard to teach a slow learner, and now he's one of our best employees." (Participant 7)
Early Familiarization with Work Environment	"On my first day, he made me feel comfortable and assured me I could ask for help anytime." (Participant 1)
Co-Worker	"He didn't just give orders; he worked with us, even doing tasks like cleaning." (Participant 2)

Source: *author's illustration about qualitative findings*

Findings revealed that the manager was proactive in resolving issues and listening to feedback. Moreover, the manager provided tailored support to employees with learning difficulties. It is also evident that the new employees were warmly welcomed and supported. Furthermore, the manager often worked alongside employees, leading by example.

Main Theme 4: Professional Aptitude

This theme reflects the manager's professional skills, including goal focus, planning, and adherence to company rules.

Table 4: Responses about Professional Aptitude

Goal Focused	"He never let personal issues affect his work. He was always dedicated." (Participant 5)
Good Planner	"He always planned ahead, making sure we were prepared for promotions or busy days." (Participant 2)
Employees' Retention Skills	"He always found ways to keep us motivated and happy at work." (Participant 10)
Self-Control	"She never lost her temper, even with angry customers." (Participant 7)
Following Company Rules	"He never broke the rules, and he expected the same from us." (Participant 9)

Source: *author's illustration about qualitative findings*

Results showed that the manager prioritized work commitments, even during personal challenges. In addition to that effective planning ensured daily targets were met without overburdening employees. Moreover, the manager retained employees by addressing their concerns and offering flexibility. Interestingly, the manager remained calm and composed, even in stressful situations. Lastly, the manager strictly adhered to company policies, setting an example for employees.

The findings reveal four main themes clearly interlinked with authentic leadership traits among

managers in the UK's retail sector:

- Genuine and Positive Attitude: Kindness, honesty, and approachability.
- Informal Relations: Rewards, respect, flexibility, and personal support.
- Formal Relations: Problem-solving, empowerment, and collaboration.
- Professional Aptitude: Goal focus, planning, and adherence to rules.

These themes highlight the manager's authenticity, emotional intelligence, and ability to build strong, trust-based relationships with employees. The findings align with the principles of authentic leadership, emphasizing self-awareness, transparency, and moral integrity.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study identified four main themes based on employees' perceptions of authentic leadership: Genuine and Positive Attitude, Informal Relations, Formal Relations, and Professional Aptitude. These themes align with existing literature on authentic leadership while introducing new insights. Employees described their managers as kind, honest, and approachable. The manager's kindness and patience in handling mistakes fostered a supportive work environment. This aligns with George's (2003) model of authentic leadership, which emphasizes leading with heart and building emotional connections. The findings also resonate with Luthans and Avolio (2003) and Walumbwa et al. (2008), who highlight the importance of self-awareness and moral standards in authentic leadership.

- Polite and Kind: Employees felt valued and supported, even when errors occurred. This reflects the leader's ability to lead with empathy and compassion.
- Honesty: Transparency in communication and actions-built trust among employees, aligning with George's (2010) emphasis on relational transparency.
- Easily Approachable: A new theme emerged, highlighting the manager's friendly and welcoming demeanor, which created a safe and comfortable work environment.

This theme focuses on the manager's efforts to build relationships beyond formal duties, including rewards, respect, flexibility, and personal support. These practices align with the self-awareness dimension of authentic leadership (Luthans and Avolio, 2003; Gardner et al., 2005).

- Rewards and Perks: Recognizing employees' hard work through rewards and perks fostered motivation and engagement.
- Flexibility: A new theme, flexibility, emerged as managers accommodated employees' personal needs, promoting work-life balance and well-being.

Managers were seen as problem solvers, mentors, and co-workers, focusing on professional development and empowerment. This aligns with the self-regulation dimension of authentic leadership (Luthans and Avolio, 2003).

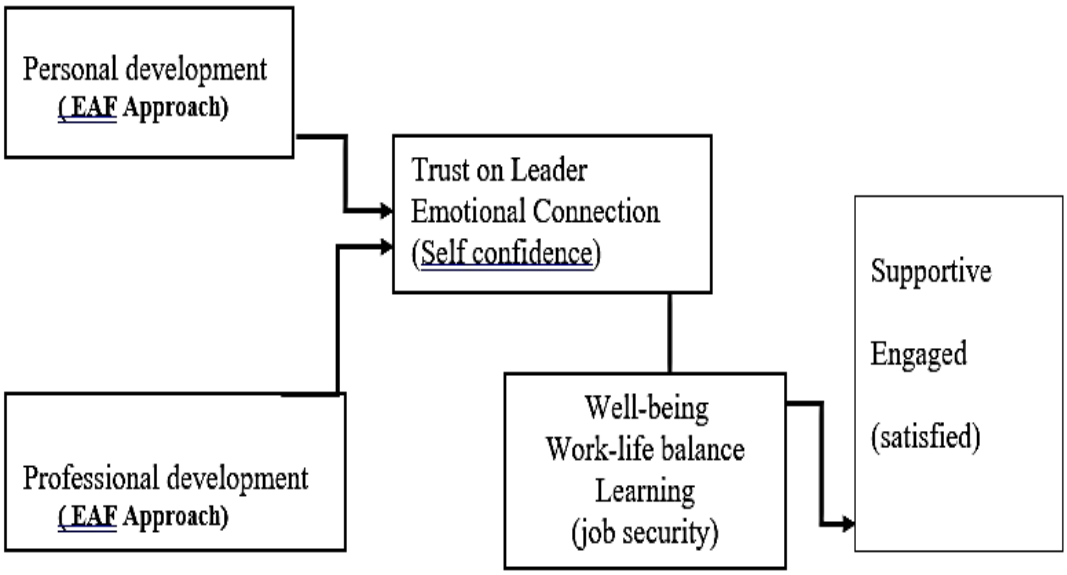
- Empowering Slow Learners: Managers provided tailored support to employees with learning difficulties, transforming them into skilled workers.
- Co-Worker: Managers worked alongside employees, leading by example and fostering a collaborative environment.
- Theme 4: Professional Aptitude
- Managers demonstrated strong professional skills, including goal focus, planning, and adherence to company rules. This aligns with the self-regulation and internalized moral perspective dimensions of authentic leadership (Luthans and Avolio, 2003; Gardner et al.,

2005).

- Goal Focused: Managers prioritized work commitments, even during personal challenges.
- Self-Control: Managers remained calm and composed, even in stressful situations, reflecting emotional regulation.

The above findings define two major areas of Authentic followership development: Personal development and Professional development. Personal development is comprised of Theme 1(Genuine and positive attitude) and Theme2 (Informal relations) while the professional area relates to Theme 2 (Formal relations) and Theme 4(Professional aptitude). The findings further led to discovery of 'EAF approach' based on new sub themes (Easily approachable and flexible) identified under this study which promotes well-being, work-life balance and job security in followers that consequently effect on job satisfaction and wilful engagement of the followers.

Authentic followership development (AFD) model



**EAF approach (Easily approachable and flexible)

Source: Authentic Followership Development Model based on findings of this study

Contributions to Theory

- New Themes: The study introduced new themes, such as flexibility and easily approachability, which were not previously explored in authentic leadership literature.
- Authentic Followership Model: The study developed an Authentic Followership Development Model, highlighting the importance of personal and professional development in fostering authentic followership.
- Qualitative Insight: Unlike previous quantitative studies, this research provided a deep qualitative understanding of employees' experiences under authentic leadership.

Contributions to Practice

- Leadership Development: The findings can guide leadership training programs, emphasizing kindness, transparency, and flexibility.
- Workplace Strategies: Retail organizations can implement flexible work policies, feedback

systems, and recognition programs to enhance employee well-being and engagement.
- Employee Retention: By prioritizing work-life balance and well-being, organizations can retain talented employees and foster a positive workplace culture.

Recommendations for organizations

- Prioritize Work-Life Balance: Implement flexible work policies to support employees' personal and professional needs.
- Foster Transparency: Encourage open communication and honesty to build trust between leaders and employees.
- Recognize and Reward: Establish recognition programs to appreciate employees' hard work and contributions.
- Feedback Systems: Regularly collect employee feedback to identify areas for improvement and promote a positive work environment.

Recommendations for Future Research

- Expand Sample Size: Include diverse participants from various sectors to enhance generalizability.
- Longitudinal Studies: Conduct long-term studies to observe changes in employee experience over time.
- Quantitative Analysis: Combine qualitative insights with quantitative data to provide a comprehensive understanding of authentic leadership.
- Gender Perspectives: Explore how gender influences authentic leadership practices and employee experiences.

Research limitations

- Sample Size and Scope: The study focused on a single retail organization in the UK, limiting generalizability.
- Researcher Bias: The researcher's prior experience in the retail sector may have influenced data interpretation.
- Cross-Sectional Design: The study's findings are based on a single point in time, which may not capture long-term trends.

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A Comparative Analysis of Leadership Styles Across Four Sectors: Implications for Organizational Success

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Abstract
The effectiveness of leadership styles—autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire—is explored across four sectors: technology, healthcare, education, and manufacturing in this research paper. Sector-specific challenges and outcomes are analyzed to highlight the importance of adapting leadership approaches to organizational contexts. Trait and behavioral theories are drawn upon, and the role of situational and ethical leadership in achieving sustainable success is emphasized. It is revealed that innovation and employee satisfaction are fostered by democratic leadership, while autocratic leadership is found to be effective in high-stakes scenarios. Recommendations are given at the end.

Keywords: *Leadership styles, sector-specific leadership, organizational success, comparative analysis*

JEL Classification: M12, M54, L20, O15

Introduction

Leadership is defined as a method where an individual or a group are being influenced to accomplish a shared goal or objective (Northouse, 2012). Similarly, Zaccaro (2001) states that leadership directs organizational human resources towards achieving strategic objectives aligned with the external environmental impacts. Moreover, Zeitchik (2012) states that leadership encourages others to follow the leader's vision contained by the strictures set by the leader. Nevertheless, leadership influences followers to achieve collective objectives willfully instead of using power. Furthermore, However, Bass & Riggio (2006) state that leadership is essential for organizations to perform exceeding expectations.

Leadership style is a leader's method to deliver guidance, executing plans, and motivating followers. Accordingly, there are three main styles of leadership identified, i.e., Autocratic (Authoritarian), Democratic (Participative) and Laissez-Faire (Delegative). Autocratic leaders' decision making is based on their own thinking and beliefs. They do not consider advice or input

of others for their decisions. Democratic leaders encourage their peers to input ideas and opinions for decision-making. However, the final call on the decision is made by the leader. Laissez-faire leaders have a mindset of belief and dependence on their followers. Thus, group members are given the freedom to resolve their own problems. Nevertheless, some research states that Laissez-faire drives the lowest productivity among a group. On the other hand, Kaur et al. (2024) commenced research on effective leadership styles in project management for organizational success. Their study concluded that leadership is a cornerstone of organizational success, influencing strategic outcomes, employee motivation, and organizational culture. Defined as the process of influencing individuals or groups to achieve shared goals, leadership plays a pivotal role in navigating complex challenges and driving innovation (Haque et al., 2015). However, the effectiveness of leadership styles varies across sectors due to differences in organizational structures, goals, and external environments.

The application and impact of leadership styles—autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire—are examined across four sectors: technology, healthcare, education, and manufacturing in this paper. Sector-specific challenges and outcomes are compared to providing insights into how approaches can be adapted by leaders to achieve optimal results. An analysis of leadership theories, sector-specific case studies, and a comparative evaluation of leadership styles are part of the scope, reflecting contextual specific body of knowledge enhanced. The significance of this study is also evident in its contribution to understanding how leadership practices can be tailored to address sector-specific demands, ultimately leading to the enhancement of organizational performance and employee well-being. The research is about depth rather than width (Faizan et al., 2022; Kaur & Haque, 2024). Hence, the focus is confined to only three styles and four sectors.

Therefore, the aim of this systematic review is to draw comparison between leadership styles in four different sectors.

Literature Review

There are many different leadership theories but keeping the scope of the manuscript in mind, only selective theories and styles are discussed in this paper.

Trait theory of leadership

It is posited by trait theory that common characteristics such as intellect, emotional intelligence, and openness to experience are shared by effective leaders (Northouse, 2012; Luthans et al., 2021). Zaccaro (2001) argued that followers are inspired and aligned with organizational goals by these traits. A strong correlation between leadership effectiveness and traits such as extraversion, conscientiousness, and emotional stability was found by Judge et al. (2002). Some traits are supposed to be acquired by experience and training, whereas others are thought to be innate (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991; Luthans et al., 2021).

In other words, this theory states that effective leaders share a set of common characteristics and qualities. According to research there is a positive association between individual qualities such as intellect, sociability, conscientiousness, self-efficacy, and openness to experience. These qualities enable the attraction of followers towards a shared vision. Accordingly, individual skills and knowledge, personality, behavioral and thinking patterns have a direct relationship with his/her leadership style. Research suggests that some traits are received through inheritance and there are attributes that can be developed.

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Behavioral theory of leadership

The focus is shifted by behavioral theorists from innate traits to learned behaviors, suggesting that leaders are made rather than born (Stogdill, 1948; Luthans et al., 2021). In other words, behavioral theory of leadership focuses on behaviors of leaders instead of characteristics and abilities within an individual. Hence this school of thought suggests that behaviors can be learned more easily than traits and leaders can be made rather than born. Two dimensions of leadership behavior—consideration (building trust and respect) and initiating structure (defining tasks and roles). In other words, consideration refers to establishing mutual respect and trust with followers. Initiating structure refers to defining tasks that group members should be doing. Similarly, University of Michigan Studies has recognized two styles of leadership. Namely, employee centered leadership and job centered leadership (Fleishman, 1953; Luthans et al., 2021). In other words, employee-centered or people-oriented leadership gives preference to people over task while job-centered leadership styles have higher concern for task than employees, as highlighted by the University of Michigan Studies (Luthans et al., 2021). These dimensions were further developed by Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid (1964), which mapped leadership styles according to concern for people and concern for results (Luthans et al., 2021). Figure 1 below shows the various leadership styles depicted from the Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid. However, keeping the scope of paper in mind, the paper focuses on autocratic leadership – 'authority-compliance-management' (9,1), democratic leadership – 'middle-of-the-road management' (5,5), and laissez-faire leadership – 'country club management' (1,9).

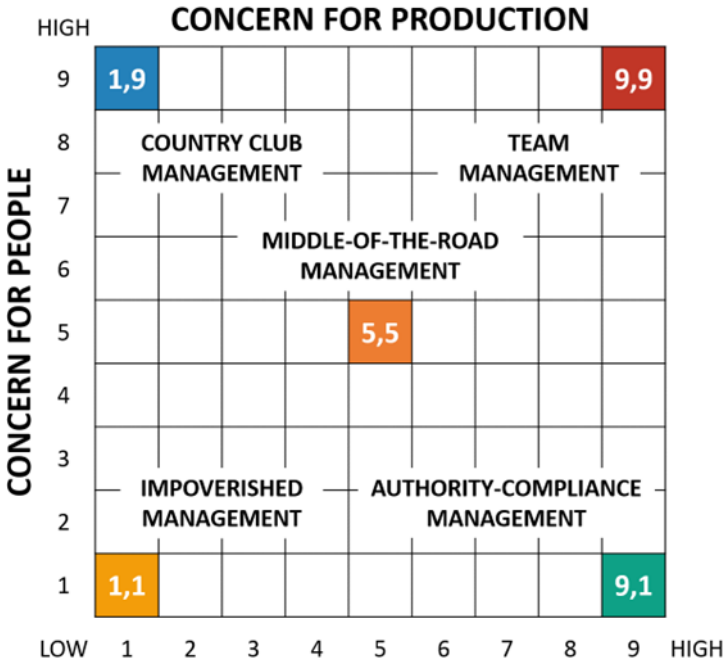

Figure 1: *Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid (source: Blake et al., 1962)*

Leadership Styles

Some of the prominent leadership styles are discussed below in Table 1:

Table 1: Summary of leadership styles considered in this study

Leadership Style	Key Concepts	Reference
Autocratic Leadership	Centralized decision-making, suitable for high-stakes or crisis situations but often	Kaur et al. (2024).

	demotivating for employees	
Democratic Leadership	Encourages employee participation, fostering innovation and engagement but may slow decision-making.	Haque et al. (2015)
Laissez-Faire Leadership	Promotes autonomy and creativity but risks lack of direction and accountability	(Haque et al., 2015; Kaur et al., 2024)

Source: *authors' illustration based on literature review*

As evident in Table 1, these are common styles found in most of the sectors. Autocratic leadership refers to the style of leadership where leaders make decisions completely on their own using their power and authority. Thus, the decisions they make, and the outcomes completely rely on their judgement and intuition. Moreover, autocratic leader controls employees on what tasks should be achieved, the methods of achieving them, people involved and time frame. Leaders who follow this style micro-manage their teams focused on targets, maintain discipline and order, and have streamlined the tasks for teams with a rigid structure. Nevertheless, Maseti & Gumede (2011) argue that autocratic leadership is outdated as there is no input received from other members for the decision making, dictatorship of the leader and little to no reward and recognition to motivate them but disciplinary actions taken against them.

Democratic leadership style solves the weaknesses of autocratic leadership. Employees are motivated and their ideas are valued, and organization benefits from diverse creative ideas from this approach. Research shows that employee engagement is high in organizations with democratic leadership. However, decision making becomes slow and some ideas may be disregarded through this approach. Usually, this leadership style is not feasible for emergency situations. On the other hand, laissez-faire leadership promotes trust and responsibility upon employees. Thus, this is an ideal type of leadership for independently motivated employees with expert knowledge and experience. This way they could act productively without any interference. Nevertheless, some research shows that workers who are not competent may lack direction and motivation under laissez-faire leadership. Moreover, employees lack awareness of their role and the low accountability within the organization may lead to corruption. However, situational and ethical leadership is another emerging concept.

Situational and Ethical Leadership

Situational leadership theories, such as Hersey and Blanchard's model (1969), emphasize adapting styles to the competence and maturity of followers (Luthans et al., 2021). Ethical leadership focuses on moral principles, while servant and authentic leadership prioritize employee well-being and genuine relationships (Brown & Treviño, 2006; Javed et al., 2020). These approaches are increasingly recognized as essential for sustainable organizational success (Avolio & Gardner, 2005).

According to Haque & Yamoah (2021), project success and team dynamics are positively affected by the ethical leadership style because of ethical behavior, integrity, and fairness. Interestingly, ethical leaders can be better described as role models that are effective in creating and fostering a culture of trust, transparency, and accountability within a team (Brown & Trevino, 2006). On the other hand, situational leadership indicates that the role of leader depends on the situation (Luthans et al., 2021). Thus, it means that the level of maturity among employees improve would mean that the role of leader gradually reduces. As the situation changes, the role of a leader also changes. Interestingly, the work of Haque & Yamoah (2014) showed that alike situational leadership is situational commitment. In other words, the commitment of employees depends on the situation.

As their situation changes, their commitment also changes to certain degree.

The above literature has provided the foundation to extract data related to the research phenomenon. Hence, in the next section, research methodology has been discussed.

Research Methodology

In this study, we employed a qualitative comparative analysis of leadership styles across four sectors: technology, healthcare, manufacturing, and education. Case studies, scholarly publications, and industry-specific reports are the sources of the data. The effectiveness of autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire leadership in addressing sector-specific challenges and achieving organizational goals is evaluated as part of the analysis. A theoretical foundation for the findings is provided by incorporating insights from leadership theories.

Data Collection

Table 2: Data gathered in this study

Sources	**Description**
Academic Literature	Peer-reviewed journal articles and books on leadership theories, including trait theory, behavioral theory, and situational leadership, were reviewed to establish a theoretical foundation.
Case Studies	Sector-specific case studies were analyzed to understand the application of leadership styles in real-world scenarios. For example, case studies on leading technology companies, healthcare organizations, educational institutions, and manufacturing firms were examined.
Sector Reports	Industry reports and organizational analyses from reputable sources such as Fortune 500 rankings, McKinsey & Company, and Harvard Business Review were used to gather insights into leadership practices and outcomes.
Historical Data	Historical data on organizational performance, employee engagement, and leadership effectiveness were collected to support comparative analysis.

Source: *authors' illustration showing data collection process*

Data Analysis

A thematic analysis technique used to examine the gathered reports and data. Important themes on the efficacy of leadership styles were found and categorized by industry. The analysis focused on:

- Leadership styles, including authoritarian, democratic, and laissez-faire, vary among sectors.
- How leadership philosophies affect organizational results including creativity, worker happiness, and output.
- Sector-specific challenges and how leadership styles address these challenges.

Ethical Considerations

The study adheres to ethical research practices by:

- Using only publicly available and properly cited data.

- Ensuring the confidentiality and anonymity of organizations and individuals mentioned in case studies.
- Avoiding misrepresentation or manipulation of data to support specific conclusions.

Findings and Discussions

Technology Sector

Innovation and flexibility are key to the technology industry's success, which makes democratic leadership incredibly powerful in contrast to autocratic and laissez-faire leadership styles. Leaders who foster teamwork and innovation, like those in top IT firms, frequently become market leaders (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Kaur et al., 2024; Faizan et al., 2022). However, authoritarian leadership may be required to ensure prompt decision-making in high-pressure scenarios, including product launches (Yukl, 2013).

Healthcare Sector

Healthcare sector and most service sectors require ethical and servant leadership because of to the sector's emphasis on patient care and well-being (Spears, 2010; Kaur et al., 2024). Teamwork among medical professionals is fostered by democratic leadership, while autocratic leadership may be required in emergency situations (Goleman, 2000). The requirement for rigorous adherence to medical procedures makes laissez-faire leadership less prevalent.

Education Sector

Democratic and transformational leadership are effective in the education sector, as they promote collaboration and innovation among educators (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000). Nonetheless, communication is key for effective management of employees in any sector (Haq & Faizan, 2023). Administrative decision-making may be effectively handled by autocratic leadership, but creativity and morale among teaching staff can be stifled by it (Bush & Glover, 2003).

Manufacturing Sector

Efficiency and productivity are ensured by task-oriented leadership in manufacturing (Fiedler, 1967; Luthans et al., 2021). Large teams are effectively managed, and production targets are met by autocratic leadership, but employee engagement is improved, and turnover is reduced by democratic leadership (Herzberg, 1966; Luthans et al., 2021).

Table 3: *Effectives of styles in considered sectors*

Sector	**Autocratic Leadership**	**Democratic Leadership**	**Laissez-Faire Leadership**
Technology	Effective in crises	Highly effective	Moderate effectiveness
Healthcare	Effective in emergencies	Highly effective	Less effective
Education	Less effective	Highly effective	Moderate effectiveness
Manufacturing	Effective for efficiency	Effective for engagement	Less effective

Source: *Research findings*

Table 3 reflects most often the democratic style of leadership is highly effective among considered sectors. As discussed earlier, autocratic is more task-oriented while democratic is people-oriented style of leadership. Thus, we found that when considering task-oriented leadership style, the benefit is that leaders can achieve task completion in a timely manner. However, leaders need to ensure clear instructions and work schedules are provided on achievable goals to succeed. However, employee motivation levels are low in task-orientation due to lack of autonomy and creativity. Thus, excessive task orientation impacts the productivity of the organization due to low innovation creativity.

On the contrary, people-oriented leadership motivates employees and enhances creativity and innovation of the organization. Moreover, employees feel empowered, valued, and strengthen employee engagement with the company. However, there are number of challenges entailed with people-oriented leadership style such as lack of direction that may result in ineffective decisions, and less focus on achieving tasks.

However, research suggests that one best style of leadership does not exist. The effectiveness of each style of leadership depends on the situation. Thus, leaders should assess employees' work styles, maturity, typical work schedule and goals of the company when deciding ideal leadership style. Hersey and Blanchard suggested four types of leadership that are ideal to be used depending on different situations. Accordingly, delegating style is ideal for employees with high maturity, while participating style for experienced employees who lack confidence for task assignments. Additionally, selling style is suited for employees who are capable but are unwilling to do the job while Telling style is appropriate for employees with low capability and willingness.

Moreover, research has introduced few moral approaches as best approaches to leadership. Namely, ethical leadership, servant leadership and authentic leadership. Ethical leadership refers to display and promotion of ethically appropriate behavior through actions, social relationships, communication, and reinforcement. In addition, authentic leadership refers to fostering genuine relationships with their followers and providing significance to their opinions. In servant leadership style a leader's main goal is to promote the well-being of others in the organization. The aim of a servant leader is to achieve authority rather than power.

Table 4: *Representation of leadership styles in considered sectors*

Sector	**Autocratic Leadership**	**Democratic Leadership**	**Laissez-Faire Leadership Sector**
Technology	20%	60%	20%
Healthcare	30%	50%	20%
Education	10%	70%	20%
Manufacturing	40%	40%	20%

Source: *Research findings of present study*

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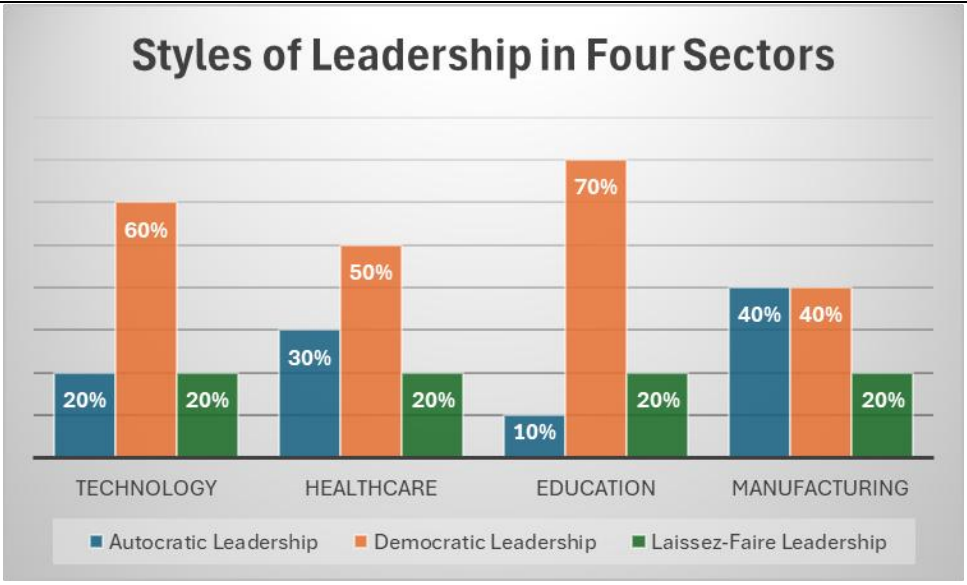

Figure 2: *Sectorial Representation in study.*

Democratic leadership works very well in the technology sector (60%) because creativity and teamwork are essential. For creative teams, laissez-faire leadership is only marginally successful (20%), whereas autocratic leadership is employed in times of crisis (20%). However, in the healthcare industry, autocratic leadership is required in emergency situations (30%), while democratic leadership is also prevalent (50%) for teamwork. Because of rigorous regulations, laissez-faire is less prevalent (20%). In a similar vein, the education sector likewise discovered that democratic leadership fosters cooperation the best (70%) of all. For autonomous initiatives, laissez-faire is somewhat successful (20%) while autocratic leadership is rarely employed (10%). Finally, in the manufacturing industry, democratic leadership is just as vital (40%) for employee engagement as authoritarian leadership (40%) for efficiency because structure is necessary, laissez-faire is less successful (20%).

Conclusion and Recommendations

In this research, we concluded that the necessity of adapting leadership styles to sector-specific requirements is pivotal. Innovation and employee happiness are most effectively encouraged by democratic leadership, but the requirement for authoritarian leadership may arise in high-stakes or crisis circumstances. We also conclude that the sector-specific difficulties are effectively tackled, and long-term success is fostered by ethical and situational leadership techniques.

The following recommendations are given:

Depending on the maturity and context of their teams, leaders should modify their approaches, hence, we recommend situational leadership approach. Furthermore, we recommend that ethical practices should be more often in education and healthcare sectors. We recommend that servant leadership is more effective style in service sectors including education and healthcare. It is also recommended that leaders and managers should balance task and relationship orientations. The goal of leaders should be to strike a right balance between worker's well-being and productivity. Lastly, we recommend that sectors shall invest in leadership development. To assist leaders in acquiring flexible and moral leadership abilities, organizations should provide training and encourage leadership mentoring programs.

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Exploring the Influence of Leadership Styles on Organizational Commitment: A Quantitative Study

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Abstract
The relationship between leadership styles and organizational commitment is examined, focusing on how different leadership approaches influence employees' commitment levels. Organizational commitment is considered a critical factor in employee retention, job satisfaction, and overall organizational performance. A sample of 220 participants from the services sector was drawn and a quantitative analysis was employed to explore the impact of leadership on commitment. Data was collected using validated scales for leadership styles (e.g., ethical, authentic, and inclusive leadership) and organizational commitment. Statistical analyses, including Cronbach's alpha, correlation, regression, and t-tests, were conducted to test the hypotheses. A significant positive relationship between ethical and authentic leadership styles and organizational commitment was established while a moderate impact was shown by inclusive leadership. The growing body of literature on leadership and organizational behavior benefits from this study. Practical implications proposed that leadership development programs emphasizing ethical and inclusive practices should be prioritized by organizations to enhance employee commitment and ensure organizational success.

Keywords: *Authentic leadership, ethical leadership, inclusive leadership, organizational commitment*

JEL Classification: M12, M54, L20

Introduction

Employee performance, retention, and job satisfaction are all considered to be significantly influenced by organizational commitment (OC), which is the psychological bond that employees have with their respective organizations (Haque & Aston, 2016). This commitment is seen to be significantly shaped by leadership, which is a major factor affecting employee behavior and corporate culture (Javed et al., 2018). A plethora of studies investigated the effects of many leadership philosophies, including inclusive, authentic, and ethical leadership on organizational outcomes (Haque et al., 2021; Younas et al., 2022). Nonetheless, little is known about the precise

processes that explain how different theories of leadership affect organizational commitment, especially in culturally and organizationally diverse settings of service sectors.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the linkage between ethical, authentic, and inclusive leadership styles and organizational commitment. It seeks to give comprehensive knowledge about how considered leadership methods affect employees' organizational commitment levels. The study is carried out in a multicultural service sector, which ensures that the findings are applicable across regions.

Organizations aiming to increase employee engagement and lower employee turnover need to recognize the connection between organizational commitment and leadership. Positive organizational outcomes, such as higher level of job satisfaction and lower or manageable occupational stress, have been associated with ethical and genuine leadership styles (Haque et al., 2020; Haque & Yamoah, 2021). However, inclusive leadership promotes psychological empowerment and a sense of belonging, both of which are critical for employee engagement and commitment (Javed et al., 2018). This study contributes to literature by providing empirical evidence on the impact of these leadership styles on organizational commitment.

The aim is to investigate the relationship between organizational commitment and leadership styles, which is the main goal of this study. The study specifically aims to:

- Analyze how ethical leadership affects organizational commitment.
- Examine how commitment is fostered by authentic leadership.
- Evaluate how inclusive leadership affects employees' levels of commitment.

Literature Review

According to Haque and Yamoah (2014), several scholars from behavioral science fields have identified and described organizational commitment (OC). According to Sheldon (1971), OC is the constructive (positive) intent that employees exhibit by ensuring that organizational objectives are accomplished. According to Becker's "Side-Bet" theory (1960), which forms the basis of an earlier definition, "when the person and his performed activities are in a steady line, it creates a side-bet, as the interest of a person develops towards the assigned activities, reflecting commitment" (Becker, 1960; p.32). Since it assumes that it is a characteristic of people's behavior, therefore Becker's side-bet theory has received harsh criticism from theorists. Instead, OC may be viewed as a "trade" between the organizations and its employees in exchange for compensation or benefits (Sheldon, 1971; Buchanan, 1974; cited Porter, Steers, and Mowday, 2005; Haque, 2018). Even this is far from qualifying as a comprehensive theory.

Bateman and Strasser (1984) argue thus, "a worker's desire to be…affiliated with their…organization [causes them] to…demonstrate efforts to achieve organizational goals and remain loyal" (p. 97). This is tautological. Worse, it is not always the case that efforts to achieve goals represent loyalty to the organization. Employees may not be loyal to the organization but faithful to their responsibilities and tasks. Task commitment is far from organizational commitment. Porter et al., (1974) claimed that organizational commitment is commitment shown by individuals towards their organization reflected in voluntary effort, accepting organization's norms, while being willingness to stay with the same organization. Mowday et al., (1979) identified three attributes of organizational commitment (OC), naming them affective commitment (AC), normative commitment (NC) and continuance commitment (CC) (Haque and Yamoah, 2014).

According to several researchers, there are three different attributes of organizational commitment: affective commitment (AC), normative commitment (NC) and continuance commitment (CC) (Allen and Meyer, 1996; Boehman, 2006; Canipe, 2006; Haque and Yamoah, 2014). Additionally, sentiments and intent that workers demonstrate when they view company's goals as their own is affective commitment (Haque and Yamoah, 2014). The claims made by Haque and Yamoah (2014) that NC is an obligatory feeling that workers have for a company, AC is linked to the work itself while CC is a feeling that encourages employees to remain with the same organization.

However, there are other schools of thought. According to Kanter (1968), continuous commitment can be treated as a "rational choice" - cost-benefit analysis, in which continuing to stay with the same company is viewed as advantageous while departing could be costly. This provided an explanation of affective commitment using an internalized pressure. Later, Wiener (1982) described normative commitment as a demand that is internalized (norm) while emotional attachment is 'affective' and choosing not to quit is continuous commitment. Interestingly, distinctive types of relationship are demonstrated by the different dimensions of organizational commitment (Mathieu and Zajac, 1990; Steers, 1997) Haque and Yamaoh (2014) stated:

- In the banking sector, normative commitment is lower among employees, and it is evident that they have moderately negative job satisfaction, while a positive association is found between job satisfaction and AC and NC (Madi & Jarad, 2012). Furthermore, Hassan et al., (2014) found that bank employees, who have appropriate organizational support, report a higher level of organizational commitment and tend to perform better, irrespective of whether the bank is a public or private institution.
- Non-monetary benefits clearly improve employee performance in the IT industry (Tan and Lau, 2012). In this case, there is a positive correlation between work satisfaction and organizational commitment since both are often increased when employees get non-monetary benefits.
- Low affective commitment and normative commitment and high continuous commitment are seen in public healthcare.
- Employees in private healthcare demonstrate high affective and normative commitment linked to organizational support, but low continuation commitment (Halepota and Irani, 2010). Furthermore, organizational assistance is given through job training, procedural justice, and incentives and recognition (Halepota and Irani, 2010).
- All three forms of organizational commitment—AC, NC, and CC—have a positive correlation with work satisfaction in the hotel industry and are favorably correlated with POS (Hemdi, 2009).
- Although it is evident that POS is strongly connected with AC and NC in the healthcare industry, it is also strongly and positively associated with CC in the private sector, and vice versa in the public sector.

Ethical Leadership

Integrity, fairness, and moral behavior are traits of ethical leaders that build commitment and trust among staff members (Brown, Treviño, & Harrison, 2005). Accountability, transparency, and moral decision-making are given top priority by ethical leaders, and they have a positive impact on organizational outcomes including employee commitment, performance, and satisfaction (Haque & Yamoah, 2021). According to studies, ethical leadership fosters creative work practices and lowers occupational stress, which in turn increases organizational commitment (Haque et al., 2021). For example, ethical leadership drastically lowers stress levels among workers, increasing

commitment and job satisfaction (Haque and Yamoah, 2021). Additionally, moral leaders foster an environment of fairness and trust, which motivates workers to return the favor by becoming more engaged and loyal (Javed et al., 2018).

Authentic Leadership

Relational transparency, self-awareness, balanced processing, and an internalized moral viewpoint are characteristics of authentic leadership (Walumbwa et al., 2008). Employee trust and psychological safety are fostered by authentic leaders who are sincere, open, and consistent in their behavior (Haque et al., 2020). By giving workers more authority and a stronger sense of purpose, authentic leadership has been found to have a positive impact on organizational commitment (Haque et al., 2020). For example, Haque et al. (2020) discovered that authentic leadership considerably enhances psychological capital, which in turn increases organizational commitment. Authentic leaders also foster a positive work environment by connecting their behaviors with their actions and values, which resonates with workers and further strengthens their emotional attachment to the organization (Javed et al., 2018).

Inclusive Leadership

According to Carmeli et al. (2010), inclusive leadership places a strong emphasis on appreciating diversity, encouraging teamwork, and establishing a work atmosphere where all staff members feel valued and empowered. According to Younas et al. (2022), inclusive leaders ensure that everyone feels included in decision-making processes and actively consider the feedback from a variety of team members. Higher levels of psychological empowerment - a major factor in organizational commitment, have been associated with this leadership style (Javed et al., 2018). According to Younas et al. (2022), inclusive leadership increases employee voice behavior, which in turn promotes commitment and a sense of belonging. Furthermore, by utilizing a variety of viewpoints, inclusive leadership fosters creativity and innovation, which further enhances organizational effectiveness (Haque et al., 2021).

Theoretical Framework

The study is based on the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), which holds that workers are more engaged and committed when they get favorable treatment from their leaders. Furthermore, inclusive leadership encourages commitment by enabling staff members to accept responsibility for their job, as explained by the idea of psychological empowerment (Spreitzer, 1995, Javed et al., 2018).

Hypotheses

The following are the hypotheses developed from existing literature:

H1: *Ethical leadership is positively related to organizational commitment*.
H2: *Authentic leadership is positively related to organizational commitment.*
H3: *Inclusive leadership is positively related to organizational commitment.*

Figure 1: *Theoretical framework (author's own illustration)*

Research Methodology

To investigate the correlation between organizational commitment and leadership styles, this study used a cross-sectional quantitative method. A structured survey was used to gather data from 220 participants in a variety of sectors. To ensure a sufficient and representative sample, the study used a purposive sampling approach, choosing workers from a range of service sectors with different degrees of expertise and organizational responsibilities.

The survey included validated scales for:

- Leadership Styles - Ethical Leadership Scale (Brown et al., 2005), Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (Walumbwa et al., 2008), and Inclusive Leadership Scale (Carmeli et al., 2010).
- Organizational Commitment - Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Haque, 2018).

Harman's single-factor test was used to identify any common technique bias. Since, results showed the items of all variables included in the study were confined to a single factor explaining 35% of the total variance, which was considerably below the 50% cut-off mark, hence, this study avoids common method bias.

Data was analyzed using SPSS version 27. The following are the steps used in the analysis process explained in Table 1:

Table 1: Steps and Descriptions in Present Quantitative Analysis

Key Components	**Descriptions**
Reliability and Validity	Cronbach's alpha was used to assess internal consistency, with values above 0.70 indicating reliability. Construct validity was evaluated using factor analysis.
Correlation Analysis	Pearson's correlation examined relationships between leadership styles and organizational commitment.
Regression Analysis	Multiple regression analysis tested the predictive power of leadership styles on organizational commitment.
T-Tests	Independent samples t-tests were used to compare the effects of different leadership styles on organizational commitment.

Source: *authors' illustration of present quantitative analysis*

Prior to the gathering of data, ethical permission was acquired. All participants gave their informed consent, guaranteeing their voluntary involvement. Respondents were free to leave at any time without facing any repercussions, and confidentiality and anonymity were maintained.

Findings and Discussions

This section contains findings and discussion based on quantitative analysis.

Table 2: Reliability Statistic

Construct	Cronbach's alpha
Ethical Leadership	0.85
Authentic Leadership	0.88
Inclusive Leadership	0.83
Organizational Commitment	0.87

Source: *Results obtained from SPSS*

With Cronbach's alpha values over 0.70 (set threshold), all scales showed high internal consistency. Construct validity was validated by factor analysis as factor loadings was above 0.50.

Correlation Analysis

Table 3: Correlation between Variables of Interest

Variables	Ethical Leadership	Authentic Leadership	Inclusive Leadership	Organizational Commitment
Ethical Leadership	1	0.58**	0.52**	0.65**
Authentic Leadership	0.58**	1	0.60**	0.72**
Inclusive Leadership	0.52**	0.60**	1	0.58**
Organizational Commitment	0.65**	0.72**	0.58**	1

$p < 0.01$**

As evident in Table 3, all leadership styles (ethical, authentic, and inclusive) are positively and significantly correlated with organizational commitment ($p < 0.01$). Detailed analysis revealed that authentic leadership shows a strong correlation ($r = 0.72$). Interestingly, ethical leadership also has the strongest correlation with organizational commitment ($r = 0.65$). However, ethical leadership has lesser stronger than authentic leadership. Moreover, inclusive leadership has a moderate correlation with organizational commitment ($r = 0.58$). It is important to note that the correlations between the leadership styles themselves are also significant, indicating that these leadership styles may overlap in some respects but are distinct constructs. It is also important to note that ethical leadership style and authentic leadership style have a high impact on organizational commitment while inclusive leadership style has moderate impact on organizational commitment.

Regression Analysis

To test the hypotheses, a multiple regression analysis is performed to determine the impact of each leadership style (authentic, ethical, and inclusive leadership style) on organizational commitment.

Table 4: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square Adjusted	R Square Std.	Error of the Estimate
1	.681[a]	.489	.483	.456473

a. Predictors: (Constant), authentic leadership, ethical leadership, and inclusive leadership
b. Dependent Variable: Organizational commitment

Table 5: Anova*

Model		Sun of Squares	DF	Mean of Square	F	F-Statistic
1	Regression	34.61	1	12.41	67.35	.000[a]
	Residual	33.25	219	1.97		
	Total	67.86	220			

a. Dependent Variable: Organizational commitment
b. Predictors: (Constant), authentic leadership, ethical leadership, and inclusive leadership

The model summary above reflects that R^2 is approximately .48 indicating that the 48% variation in organizational commitment is due to variation in authentic, ethical, and inclusive leadership

(Table 4). Moreover, the ANOVA model above showed that F = 67.35, confirming that this table is highly acceptable because there is 67% explanatory power of this table (Table 5). The model is good fit for the data because F-Statistic is significant (=0.000; $p < 0.01$).

Regression Model

Table 6: Results from Regression Model

Predictors	β (Coefficient)	Standard Error	t-value	p-value	Decision
Ethical Leadership	0.74	0.12	7.43	0.000	Fail to Reject
Authentic Leadership	0.61	0.08	5.76	0.000	Fail to Reject
Inclusive Leadership	0.41	0.07	2.13	0.001	Fail to Reject

Source: *Results obtained from SPSS*

Regression model revealed that all three leadership styles are significant predictors of organizational commitment ($p < 0.01$). Interestingly, the results showed that ethical leadership has the strongest impact ($\beta = 0.74$; Table 6), meaning a one-unit increase in ethical leadership is associated with a 0.74-unit increase in organizational commitment. On the other hand, authentic leadership also has a strong impact ($\beta = 0.61$; Table 6), indicating that a one-unit increase in authentic leadership is interlinked with a 0.61-unit increase in organizational commitment. Lastly, inclusive leadership has a moderate impact ($\beta = 0.41$; Table 6), which means that a one-unit increase in inclusive leadership is associated with only 0.41-unit increase in organizational commitment.

Table 7: Hypotheses Testing

Hypotheses	B	Standard Deviation	*t*-value	P-value	Decision
H1: Ethical leadership → Organizational Commitment	0.74	0.12	7.43	0.000	Fail to Reject
H2: Authentic leadership → Organizational Commitment	0.61	0.08	5.76	0.000	Fail to Reject
H3: Inclusive leadership → Organizational Commitment	0.42	0.07	2.13	0.001	Fail to Reject

*Note: ***p<0.1, **p<0.05,* ns= non-significant (p>.05) *(Two Tail)*

The t-values for all three predictors are greater than 1.96 (critical value for $p < 0.05$), indicating that the predictors are statistically significant. The p-values are all less than 0.05, which means we fail to reject the null hypothesis for all three hypotheses. In other words, there is strong evidence to support the claim that ethical, authentic, and inclusive leadership styles are positively related to organizational commitment.

Notable implications include that ethical leadership has the strongest impact on organizational commitment (=7.43 > 1.96; 0.000 < 0.05, $p < 0.05$; Table 7), suggesting that leaders who demonstrate fairness, integrity, and ethical behavior are more likely to foster commitment among employees. Thus, our findings to some extent support the work of Javed et al. (2020) and Haque and Yamoah (2021). Furthermore, from results we confirm that authentic leadership also plays a significant role, indicating that leaders who are self-aware, transparent, and genuine can enhance

employee commitment (=5.76 > 1.96; 0.000 < 0.05, $p < 0.05$; Table 7). Hence, our studies support to a larger extent the work of Haque et al. (2020). The results also confirmed that inclusive leadership has a moderate impact, suggesting that leaders who promote diversity and inclusivity can also contribute to higher commitment levels, though to a lesser extent than ethical and authentic leadership (=2.13 > 1.96; 0.000 < 0.05, $p < 0.05$; Table 7). Therefore, this study supports the work of Javed et al. (2018) and Younas et al. (2022).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The impact of inclusive, authentic, and ethical leadership styles on organizational commitment has been confirmed by this study. The results show that organizational commitment is significantly positively correlated with all three leadership styles. It is concluded that inclusive leadership has a moderating effect while ethical and authentic leadership having significant strong effect. Additionally, the regression analysis verified that the most significant predictors of organizational commitment are authentic leadership ($\beta = 0.61$) and ethical leadership ($\beta = 0.74$), with inclusive leadership ($\beta = 0.42$) having a lesser but still significant impact. In other words, Ethical Leadership leads to significantly higher commitment while authentic leadership also drives the highest commitment. Interestingly, inclusive leadership has a moderate effect but is still important

The findings highlight the value of ethical leadership in encouraging employee commitment that are consistent with the work of Javed et al. (2020) and Haque and Yamoah (2021). Likewise, the results support the findings of Haque et al. (2020), emphasizing how authentic leadership is improving organizational commitment. The study also supports the findings of Younas et al. (2022) and Javed et al. (2018), which highlight the importance of inclusive leadership in fostering commitment, albeit to a lower degree than ethical and authentic leadership.

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

Organizations should prioritize ethical leadership development. Organizations should train leaders to practice integrity, fairness, and ethical decision-making, that could significantly increase organizational commitment. Furthermore, create ethical leadership training programs to help leaders inspire employee engagement and commitment.

In addition to that, it is recommended that organizations should enhance authentic leadership practices. To foster stronger commitment, leaders should emphasize relational transparency, self-awareness, and consistency between values and actions. To increase trust and engagement, organizations should encourage leaders and employees to promote genuine relationships and open communication.

It is also recommended that organizations should promote an inclusive leadership culture. Despite its moderate impact, inclusive leadership is nevertheless essential for commitment. When making decisions, organizations should ensure inclusivity and diversity.

It is important to support leaders in recognizing and valuing diverse perspectives, creating a sense of belongingness and involving employees in key decisions. Structured training courses should be designed by organizations for leaders that integrate inclusive, authentic, and ethical leadership components. Initiatives for mentoring and coaching can assist leaders in developing behaviors that enhance employee commitment.

Future studies should explore other leadership factors (e.g., situational or servant leadership) and

their relationship with commitment. There should be longitudinal studies to ensure the magnitude of impact in different time lags. Moreover, in-depth interviews with the experts should be considered to find hidden embedded truth.

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The Importance of Professional Networking: A Pathway to Career Success

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Abstract

To succeed in a personal, professional, and in an organizational competitive environment, professional networking has become an integral component for the individuals. The significance of professional networking in modern workplaces is critically examined in this paper, especially focusing on "how" factor. In other words, how professional networking could enhance professional growth, knowledge sharing, and opportunities for career growth. The research, which draws on existing literature, addresses major issues including time constraints and relationship authenticity while highlighting the benefits of networking, such as mentorship, industry insights, and ease of access to job opportunities. Using a qualitative approach, the study synthesizes findings from case studies, industry reports, and academic journals. Systematic analysis revealed that effective networking strategies such as leveraging social media and attending industry events, significantly assist individuals in succeeding in their careers. Further practical implications and recommendations are offered to individuals and organizations seeking to foster meaningful professional connections. For professionals seeking to maximize their networking potential, this research provides actionable insights and contributes to the growing body of knowledge on career advancement.

Keywords: *Professional networking, career development, career success, social capital*

JEL Classification: J24, L14, M53, O15

Introduction

The process of nurturing and building relationships with individuals who can provide resources, support, and opportunities to advance one's career is known as professional networking (Granovetter, 1973; Gino, 2016; Ravishankar, 2023; Kurtuy, 2024). Connecting with mentors, peers, industry leaders, and other professionals to share experiences, exchange knowledge, and create relationships are not only intentional activity but also mutually beneficial. Hence, the nature of this activity is highly dynamic and evolves based on changing career goals, professional needs, and industry trends. In today's fast-paced environment, professional networking is becoming an essential skill for career success, interconnected world, transcending industries, roles, and

boundaries of geography (Hoey, 2017).

According to Bourdieu (1986), the concepts of social capital—which describes the resources found in social networks including reciprocity, trust, and information—is the foundation of the networking concept. These resources assist individuals to gain industry insights, access job opportunities, and build mentorship relationships, all of which are crucial for career advancement. The aim of networking is to create meaningful relationships that can be beneficial, not just to exchange business cards or add connections on LinkedIn (Ferrazzi, 2014). Thus, it could be stated that professional networking is strengthening your social capital.

The way individuals' network has been completely revolutionized by the rise of digital platforms such as professional forums, LinkedIn, and Twitter. Sharing ideas, staying updated on industry trends, and connecting with professional across the world have all been easier – a massive development of these social and professional platforms. However, many professionals find it difficult to build and maintain effective networks because of challenges such as lack of skills, time constraints, or cultural barriers. Thus, this adds further importance to this manuscript to deal with those challenges. In other words, the importance, benefits challenges, and success strategies of professional networking are critically examined in this article.

The role of professional networking in career advancement and organizational success is the key focus of this manuscript. In addition to discussing the difficulties and challenges that people face while establishing and sustaining professional connections, it also looks at how networking affects the chances and probabilities of securing good jobs, sharing knowledge and exchanging information as well as ensuring effective personal branding. The study's scope includes:

- An analysis of the theoretical foundations of professional networking.
- An exploration of the benefits and challenges of networking.
- A discussion of effective networking strategies for individuals and organizations.
- Practical recommendations for fostering meaningful professional connections.

To provide a comprehensive understanding of the topic, this article draws on the existing literature, which includes industry reports, academic journals, and case studies. While individual career development is the focus, the study also considers the organizational perspective into account, highlighting the role that networking plays in collaboration, innovation, and talent acquisition.

Despite being a critical factor to career success, professional networking is often underestimated or misunderstood. Networking can be the key to gaining mentorship, unlocking hidden job opportunities, and staying ahead of industry trends in a competitive job market. Networking is a valuable tool for achieving goals for organizations since it fosters innovation, collaboration, and talent acquisition.

Although the significance of networking has been established by existing literature yet many professionals struggle to build and maintain effective networks, despite their significance (Gino, 2016; Ravishankar, 2023; Kurtuy, 2024). Lack of confidence, time constraints, and the difficulty of building authentic relationships are common challenges. This article addresses not only these problems but also provides actionable insight for maximizing the benefits of networking. This research contributes to the growing body of knowledge on career development by exploring the theoretical foundations, benefits and strategies of professional networking, as well as providing practical recommendations for both individuals and organizations. Hence, the aim of this article is to investigate the importance of professional networking on career development and organizational

success.

Theoretical Foundations of Professional Networking

Social capital theory argues that relationships serve as invaluable assets that provide access to resources such as support, information, and career opportunities (Bourdieu, 1986). These resources also serve as the strong foundation to professional networking (Bourdieu, 1986). Moreover, this theory also argues that individuals who established networks can leverage them to their advantage in various distinct professional settings (Hoey, 2017).

Granovetter's (1973) theory of weak ties is one of the most influential concepts in networking. According to this theory, weak ties or casual acquaintances are often useful for professional advancement than close friends or family members. Weak ties provide access to new and diverse information that one's immediate social circle may not have. For example, a close colleague might not be aware of a job opportunity, but a casual LinkedIn connection might have awareness and share it that could be helpful.

Lin's (2001) theory of social capital is another major theoretical perspective. It emphasizes that networking is not just about social interactions but also about achieving instrumental goals like professional development, business growth, and career advancement (Lin, 2001). According to Lin (2001), social networks help individuals access exclusive opportunities, status, and recognition that they might not otherwise obtain.

Benefits of Professional Networking

Career Opportunities

Forret & Dougherty (2004) argued that research has shown that one of the most effective ways to find job opportunities is by networking. Interestingly, referrals are the most common and effective way to secure job interviews (Forret & Dougherty, 2004). It is also found that networking reduces hiring risks, many companies prefer hiring candidates who receive recommendations by trusted connections (Gino, 2016; Ravishankar, 2023; Kurtuy, 2024). Additionally, networking exposes individuals to the hidden job market, which includes positions that are not advertised publicly.

Knowledge Sharing

Best practices, industry insights, and emerging trends are shared through professional networks (Wenger, 1998; Hoey, 2017). By interacting with experts in the field, professionals can stay updated as well as ahead on innovative strategies, new developments, and changes in market conditions. This is highly invaluable in fast-evolving industries like technology, healthcare, and finance.

Mentorship and Guidance

Chances to access mentors who can provide skill development, career advice, and opportunities for personal growth significantly increase because of a strong professional network (Kram, 1985; Hoey, 2017). Career progression requires mentoring, especially for those entering leadership roles or entering a new industry also improve to larger extent (Hoey, 2017). A mentor may provide directions on navigating workplace dynamics, overcoming challenges, and achieving long-term career goals. It could be said that professional networking brings higher stability and progression.

Personal Branding

Individuals can position themselves as thought leaders while establishing their professional reputation by networking (Schawbel, 2011). By regularly participating in industry events, sharing their expertise on platforms like LinkedIn, and engaging networking events, professionals can build their recognition and credibility in their field.

Challenges in Professional Networking

Time Constraints

The time investment required to build and maintain professional relationships is one of networking's biggest challenges (Misner & Morgan, 2004). It requires patience and time to build and maintain professional relationships because there could be other commitments that would hinder these activities. Cultivating strong connections can be difficult for busy professionals who sometimes find themselves in a position of having no time for attending networking events, meaningful interaction, and follow-ups.

Authenticity

In a highly competitive setting, many professionals struggle to establish genuine connections (Ferrazzi, 2014). There is often a tension between networking for personal gain and building sincere, mutually beneficial relationships. On the other hand, it is also important to note that networking might lead to superficial interactions because some people view it as transactional rather than relational (Ferrazi, 2014). This means that in some situations, authenticity and sincerity of networking is questionable.

Cultural Barriers

Cultural differences in networking norms create challenges for professionals working in global or cross-cultural environments (Hofstede, 1980). For instance, some Asian cultures place more emphasis on indirect relationship-building and hierarchy while on the other hand, American networking culture encourages direct self-promotion. It is essential to understand these cultural nuances to network effectively.

Effective Networking Strategies

Leveraging Social Media

Professional networking has been revolutionized by platforms such as LinkedIn, Twitter, and professional forums, which allow professionals to establish relationships with peers, employers, and industry leaders across the globe (Smith, 2017). Credibility and visibility could enhance due to joining professional groups, contributing to intelligent material, and actively participate in LinkedIn discussions.

Attending Industry Events

Meeting prominent experts, learning from business executives, and forming enduring relationships are all likely possible because of attending seminars, conferences, and networking events (Misner

& Morgan, 2004). Professionals can expand their networks and discover new business or job opportunities by attending these events.

Building Reciprocal Relationships

Mutual support and value sharing are the cornerstones of effective networking (Ferrazzi, 2014). The prime goal of successful networkers is to give as much as they could receive, whether by assistance, mentoring, or knowledge sharing. Establishing reciprocal relationships fosters trust and enduring relationships with businesses.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Professional networking is an effective strategy for knowledge sharing, career growth, and personal branding. Professionals can get access to valuable opportunities and resources by networking, which is based on social capital theory. However, obstacles such as authenticity, time restrictions, and cultural differences must be approached in a wise and appropriate manner. Individuals can maximize the benefits of networking and enhance their professional success by attending industry events, leveraging social media, and building reciprocal relationships. Professional networking is a key factor for achieving professional growth and success. Whether it is landing a new job, getting access to exclusive industry insights, or establishing relationships with influential individuals, professional networking serves as a bridge to countless opportunities. The power of networking lies in the resources it unlocks, from career advancement to personal development. However, networking is not without challenges. At times, effective networking could be highly difficult because of time constraints, personal commitments, negotiating cultural differences, and maintaining authentic connections. There is also likely possibility that few unsuccessful networking experiences might discourage an individual from even exploring future networking opportunities. Even with these challenges, the benefits far outweigh the drawbacks, especially if organizations and individuals implement well-thought-out strategies. It is concluded that the need for proactive efforts in leveraging technology (such as LinkedIn) and attending relevant events play pivotal roles in maximizing the potential of professional networks.

The following recommendations are made for individuals:

Invest time in building and maintaining professional relationships

Networking is a continuous process rather than a one-time event. In other words, individuals should not view networking as just a one-time activity because to reap rewards from successful networking they must continue to network on a regular basis. Individuals can build an invaluable and robust network by dedicating an effort to stay in touch, attending events, and following up with connections. It could be said that the key to success is to show consistency in effort and trust the process.

Use social media platforms to expand your network

LinkedIn especially offers a wealth of opportunities to expand your professional connections globally. It is one of the highly regarded social media platforms for professionals to join and connect with industry experts without any geographic boundary. To stay visible, relevant, and connected to one's preferred sector, engage with content, join groups that could assist to larger extent the professionals to further excel in their career choices and preferred industry. Being active on these professional platforms could be very useful for individuals starting a career or excelling

further.

Guidance from experienced professionals and seeking mentorship

Often career advancement requires mentoring, especially for individuals looking to step up. Consulting with seasoned experts may yield invaluable knowledge, counselling, advice, and direction to overcome obstacles related to work or sector. Establishing a mentor-mentee connection can promote job advancement and offer long-term advantages.

For organizations, the following recommendations are proposed:

Encourage employees to participate in conferences and networking events

Organizations should encourage networking among their employees on a regular basis. Promoting workers' participation in workshops, seminars, conferences, or industry meetups enables them to network with other professionals in the field, which helps the organizations in expanding their professional influence and boosting their abilities.

Provide training to individuals regarding effective networking skills

For many people, networking can be an intimidating skill. Offering training regarding successful networking techniques, including how to initiate conversation, encourage meaningful discussions, establish rapport, and maintain professional connections and relationships that could enable staff members to make the most of their networking efforts.

Foster a culture of collaboration and knowledge sharing

Companies should provide environments that encourage knowledge sharing and collaborate with colleagues both inside and outside of the organization. By encouraging innovation and information flow, this not only helps employees build strong networks but also benefits the company.

Based on the analysis of the review, the following recommendations are made to future studies:

Explore the impact of networking on specific industries or professions

Although networking has several advantages, the effects might vary greatly depending on the sector. Future studies shall examine the many ways that certain sectors—such as finance, technology, healthcare, etc.—use networking to succeed. Hence, the sample size should be further improved to gain a more holistic view of how networking operates in distinct sectors.

Examine how differences in culture affect networking practices

Understanding the cultural differences in networking norms and practices is essential considering globalization. Globalization has given birth to different types of practices and approaches therefore cultural understanding is essential because the norms and practices vary in different cultures. Future studies shall consider examining the ways in which cultural norms and obstacles affect networking practices. Customs, norms, and cultural barriers have an impact on the networking behavior. The use of Group-Grid Culture (GGC) Model should be employed to assess the effectiveness of these relationships in a range of professional contexts.
Improve data collection process

Primary methods should be employed to gain firsthand experience. This study is a commentary on the various aspects of professional networking, but it does not include interviews, focus group discussions, and surveys. Future studies should consider the use of primary instruments to collect information. The use of surveys or questionnaires would enable the researcher to quantify the information and gain mathematical objectivity. On the other hand, interviews and focus group discussions would provide data for qualitative perspective so that hidden embedded truth could be extracted. Thus, it would also help in enriching the information at hand. Future studies would develop strong foundation for understanding professional networking.

Analyze the results of professional networking over the long run

While the immediate benefits of networking, like gaining knowledge or securing job opportunities, are well-established but there is still additional research required to determine the long-term effects of professional networking. In other words, future studies should not just focus on immediate benefits but explore the long-term impact of professional networking. In what ways can professionally networking support long-term satisfaction with work, career growth, or even personal wellbeing should be the question for future studies to explore. Understanding these outcomes might offer better understanding of the lasting value of professional connections.

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Project Manager's Role in Change and Resistance

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Abstract
Project managers play a critical role in managing change and addressing resistance within organizations. Project managers enhance the chances of successful project completion by proactively recognizing and reducing potential resistance, encouraging stakeholder support, facilitating effective communication, and consistently monitoring progress. Several theories on change and resistance offer useful frameworks for understanding these dynamics, but their practical implementation requires adjustment to specific organizational contexts. A comprehensive research approach that includes both primary and secondary data collection methods can provide thorough insights into the project manager's role in change management. The findings validate the significance of communication, leadership style, employee involvement, training, change agents, resistance management strategies, cultural sensitivity, feedback mechanisms, emotional intelligence, and change readiness evaluations in successful change initiatives.

Keywords: *Organizational change, project completion, change management theories*, engagement, s*takeholder engagement, resistance*

JEL Classification: M12, M54, O15, D23

Introduction

A project manager has a critical role in managing change and handling organizational resistance (Kumar, 2020). The primary objective is to ensure successful implementation of project by proactively identifying potential resistance, reducing its impact, and promoting adaptability culture among stakeholders. Change is a fundamental part of any project, bringing in new processes, systems, or structures that disrupt the current situation (Kumar, 2020). Individuals frequently exhibit reluctance to embrace change, stemming from apprehension about the unfamiliar worries regarding employment stability, or an insufficient understanding of the potential benefits associated with the proposed change. By not addressing this resistance can result in project delays, higher costs, and lower adoption rates, ultimately jeopardizing the project's success.

The ultimate objective of a project manager's role in change and resistance management is to ensure the successful implementation of a project by proactively identifying potential resistance,

mitigating its impact, and fostering a culture of adaptability among stakeholders (Kumar, 2020; Barrett, 2021; Panel, 2023). By developing a comprehensive change management plan, fostering stakeholder buy-in, identifying and mitigating resistance, facilitating effective communication, and continuously monitoring and adjusting the change management approach, the project manager aims to minimize project delays, reduce costs, and increase adoption rates. The ultimate goal is to lead the project team through the change process smoothly. It is done by ensuring that both the technical aspects of the project and the human factors are effectively addressed for successful project delivery and long-term organizational resilience.

The project manager's role in change management involves several key responsibilities:

Creating a Change Management Plan entails developing strategies for communication, training, engaging stakeholders, and addressing resistance (Creasey, 2024). This plan serves as a guide for effectively handling the change process and overcoming potential challenges (Creasey, 2023). Securing Stakeholder Buy-in is crucial, involving early engagement and maintaining open communication to build trust and tackle concerns. The project manager needs to collaborate with sponsors (Bertsche, 2024), change agents (Barrett, 2021), and affected teams to understand their viewpoints and tailor the change approach accordingly (Dye, 2011).

Identifying and managing resistance involves conducting readiness assessments and monitoring feedback to proactively spot sources of resistance. The project manager can then implement targeted strategies, such as providing extra training, clarifying the rationale for change, or addressing specific concerns raised by stakeholders (Creasey, 2023). On the other hand, for enabling effective communication, it is essential that the project manager must ensure stakeholders receive timely updates, comprehend the benefits of the change, and have access to resources and support during the transition (Creasey, 2024).

Transformation is an ongoing process, and the project manager needs to constantly track progress, gather input, and modify the change management strategy as necessary (Creasey, 2023). This flexibility ensures that the project remains attuned to organizational needs and promptly addresses emerging challenges. The project manager's responsibilities in change and resistance management cover all stages of the project, from beginning to end. During the planning phase, the project manager collaborates with change management experts to devise a thorough strategy and plan. Throughout execution, the project manager supervises the implementation of the change management plan, facilitates communication, and deals with resistance as it arises.

Successful change and resistance management necessitates a comprehensive approach that takes into consideration both the technical aspects of the project and the human elements involved. The project manager must find a balance between delivering the project's output and ensuring that stakeholders are prepared and ready to accept the change (Creasey, 2023). By actively addressing opposition and fostering an adaptable organizational culture, the project leader can improve the chances of the project being completed successfully (Suda,2007). Moreover, they can increase the rate of user acceptance (Newton, 2023). It also helps the organization become more resilient in the long run when facing changes (Panel, 2024).

From planning to execution, the project manager's responsibilities are evident at all key stages (Gurnvo, 2024). To develop a comprehensive plan, the project manager works with change management specialists throughout the planning stage (Kumar, 2020). They facilitate communication, deal with objections, and oversee the plan's execution during execution (Carroll,

2025). To ensure successful project delivery and stakeholder readiness, effective management change requires finding a balance between the project's technical and human factors. Thus, the aim of this paper is to explore the project manager's role in effectively managing change and resistance to ensure successful project delivery and long-term organizational resilience.

Literature Review

Theories on Change and Resistance

Different theories have been suggested to comprehend the dynamics of change and resistance within organizations (Wren, 2024). Change process include several steps (Kaur & Ferreira-Sutherland, 2024). Lewin's Three-Step Model is a prominent theory that suggests the process of change encompasses three key stages: unfreezing the current state, implementing the desired change, and solidifying the new state (resistance to change) (Lewin, 1951; Burnes, 2020; Carroll, 2025). This model emphasizes the significance of preparing people and organizations for change by addressing potential resistance and cultivating a supportive environment to facilitate the transition.

Kotter's influential Eight-Step Process for leading change emphasizes the importance of creating a sense of urgency, forming a guiding coalition, establishing a clear vision, communicating effectively, empowering employees, achieving short-term successes, and integrating the change into the organization's culture (Kotter, 1996; Bedard, 2024). In other words, to understand ways to overcome the resistance to change (Council, 2017). This approach highlights the importance of leadership, stakeholder engagement, and continual reinforcement throughout the change process. The Theories of Reasoned Action and Planned Behavior developed by Ajzen and Fishbein (1991) offer valuable insights into the factors that shape individuals' intentions and behaviors towards change (resistance to change) (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1991; Aizen, 2012 LaCaille, 2013). These theories suggest that attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control significantly shape individuals' responses to change initiatives.

The existing theories on change and resistance offer valuable frameworks, but they often struggle in practical application. One common criticism is that these models oversimplify the complex and dynamic nature of organizational change (Sullivan et al., 2011; Legaspi, 2024), failing to consider the unique contexts and nuances of different organizations and projects (Ojiaku, 2024).

Lewin's Three-Step Model has been criticized for its linear and fixed approach, which may not adequately reflect the iterative and non-linear nature of change processes within contemporary organizations, especially regarding resistance to change (Cummings et al., 2016). Furthermore, the model presumes a certain degree of stability and equilibrium, which may not be consistent with the rapidly changing business environments of today. On the other hand, Kotter's Eight-Step Process, despite its wide adoption, has been questioned for its prescriptive nature and the assumption that change can be managed through a sequential and structured approach (Graves et al., 2023). Critics argue that change is often vague, unpredictable, and influenced by various external and internal factors (Sullivan et al., 2011)), that may not fit neatly into a predefined set of steps.

The Theory of Reasoned Action and the Theory of Planned Behavior have been criticized for their focus on individual decision-making processes, potentially overlooking the broader organizational and contextual factors that shape change resistance (Madden et al., 1992; Hagger, 2019).

Additionally, these theories may not fully capture the complexities of group dynamics and the influence of social norms on individual behaviors within organizations. Despite these criticisms, these theories offer valuable insights and serve as starting points for understanding change and resistance. However, project managers must adapt and tailor these frameworks to the specific contexts and challenges they face, rather than treating them as rigid prescriptions.

Effective change management necessitates a nuanced and contextual approach that considers the unique organizational culture, stakeholder dynamics, and external factors influencing the project (Redman, 2021). Project managers must adeptly navigate the complexities of change, foster open communication, and actively engage stakeholders throughout the process (van Marrewijk, 2018).

It is important to recognize that resistance is not necessarily a negative thing. It can often arise from legitimate concerns or a lack of understanding about the change initiative. By embracing productive resistance and viewing it as an opportunity for dialogue and improvement, project managers can enhance the quality of the change process and increase the likelihood of successful implementation and adoption.

In summary, while existing theories offer valuable frameworks for understanding change and resistance, their practical application demands adaptation, flexibility, and a deep understanding of the specific organizational context. Project managers must adopt a holistic and contextual approach, using these theories as guiding principles while remaining agile and responsive to the unique challenges and dynamics of each change initiative.

Research Methodology

Depending on the type of study, there are several kinds of research philosophy (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013; Kaur et al., 2024). The interpretivism philosophy is employed in this study because it helps in the researcher's understanding of reality through qualitative analysis (Pervin & Mokhtarm 2022). Research design refers to overall strategy along with the analytical approach (De Vaus,2006). Data is gathered quickly by using a cross-sectional design (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013). In other words, in one time lag data is gathered. As a result, cross-sectional design has been used. In an observational study, a research issue is addressed only by the researcher's observations. The research subjects are not manipulated or interfered with, and there are no treatment or control groups (Thamhain, 2006). In this study, many teams working on various projects were examined using observation techniques to understand how change impacts them and resistance to change (Thamhain, 2006). Being part of different teams working on different projects gives an opportunity to understand project manager's role in change and resistance. Observational techniques were employed to assess how the change is dealt by team members in different workplace settings (Abildgaard et al., 2016). A total of 20 sets of observations were carried out with the consent of the departments. Each set has 4-to-5 members working under a manager or a team leader. The observed groups were not controlled so that natural reactions are noted.

Secondary data is the secondhand data (i.e., preexisting information) already gathered by someone else (Haque, 2020; Haque et al., 2023). Such data is often helpful to gain a deep understanding of the research phenomena. In this article, secondary data is preferred because of the cost-effectiveness and limited timeframe. Using qualitative methods, thematic analysis was employed to examine the key variables. In this study, data has been collected from different sources, especially YU library and online database. A total of 132 articles were examined as the project manager's role in change and resistance. Moreover, the data was gathered through bibliometric

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analysis, which helps in confining data specificity. It helps in selection of the papers and administering it closely. Only those papers were selected that were published in Scopus databases. The findings are also graphically represented based on the literature at hand.

Based on the available literature, a graphical representation is made to show the key aspects (Table 1).

Table 1: Key aspects identified in reviewed papers

Aspect	Frequency
Communication as Key Factor	98
Leadership Style Impact	85
Employee Involvement Importance	90
Training and Development Role	80
Resistance as a Major Challenge	110
Use of Lewin's Change Model	45
Use of Kotter's 8-Step Model	60
Use of Theory of Planned Behavior	30
Quantitative Studies	50
Qualitative Studies	60
Mixed-Methods Studies	22

Source: *own illustration based on the literature*

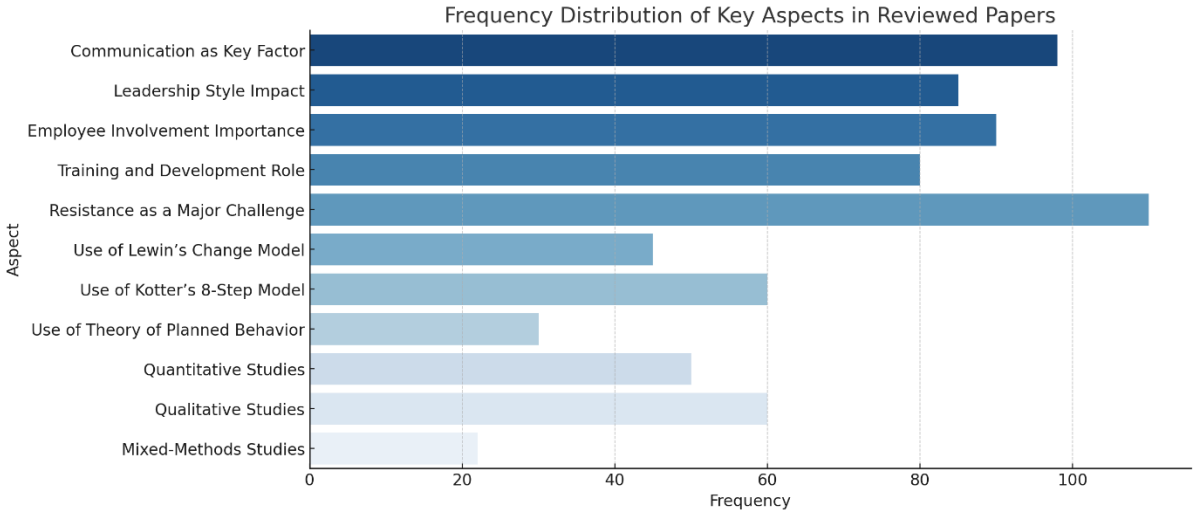

Figure 1: *author's illustration - key aspects in reviewed papers*

Explain the figure here- This figure presents a bar chart showing the frequency distribution of key aspects discussed in reviewed papers. The X-axis represents the frequency of occurrence, whereas the Y-axis lists different aspects related to organizational change.
Resistance as a major challenge appears to be the most discussed topic in the reviewed papers which is exceeding 100 occurrences.

Findings and Discussions

Below are the key findings availed from the detailed review of the existing literature (Table 2):

Table 2: Factors and key findings

Factors	Key Findings	Supporting Literature

Communication Role	Effective communication reduces resistance, builds trust, and keeps stakeholders informed and engaged.	Kotter (1996), Lewis (2011)
Leadership Style	Transformational leadership fosters a supportive environment, inspires commitment, and reduces resistance to change.	Bass (1999), Judge & Piccolo (2004)
Employee Involvement	Involving employees early in the change process increases their commitment and reduces resistance.	Burnes (2004), Armenakis & Bedeian (1999)
Training and Development	Offering training programs helps employees adapt to new skills, reducing resistance and increasing confidence in the change process.	Kotter (1996), Nadler & Tushman (1989)
Change Agents	Project managers acting as change agents play a key role in facilitating change, guiding employees, and addressing resistance effectively.	Lunenburg (2010), Caldwell (2003)
Resistance Management	Strategies such as negotiation, support, and education help manage resistance and encourage collaboration.	Kotter & Schlesinger (2008)
Cultural Awareness	Understanding and navigating organizational culture helps project managers reduce resistance by respecting norms and values.	Schein (1992), Cameron & Quinn (2006)
Feedback Mechanisms	Creating channels for employee feedback allows for addressing concerns early and making real-time adjustments to the change process.	Kotter (1996), Armenakis et al. (1993)
Emotional Intelligence	High emotional intelligence in project managers helps manage interpersonal relationships and effectively address employee concerns.	Goleman (1995), Clarke (2010)
Change Readiness	Assessing the organization's readiness for change helps anticipate resistance and prepare targeted strategies to address it.	Armenakis et al. (1993), Holt et al. (2007)

Source: *author's illustration*

The systematic review points to several important facets of project managers' approaches to dealing with organizational resistance and change management. The observations highlight how crucial staff engagement, training, communication, leadership style, resistance management, and other elements are in determining how successful change projects are. the examination of the available literature on the tactics used by project managers to effectively handle opposition and guarantee a seamless transition throughout organizational changes. The results show that project managers are more successful at managing change when they encourage open communication to resolve issues and lessen opposition. Communication is key to success (Haq & Faizan, 2023). Building trust and making sure that all parties involved are informed and involved in the process depend heavily on effective communication. The findings of Lewis (2011) and Kotter (1996), who emphasize the value of timely, clear, and transparent communication throughout organizational transformation, are consistent with this. Project managers reduce opposition and boost employee buy-in by clearly communicating the benefits of change while paying attention to their concerns. This communication strategy lessens uncertainty and increases employees' sense of support throughout changes.

In addition, the function of leadership style in handling resistance (opposition) is another important discovery obtained through systematic review. Observations revealed that resistance to changing efforts is lower for project managers using transformational leadership approaches. Our observation also confirmed therefore the findings are in line with other studies by Judge & Piccolo (2004) and Bass (1999), which emphasize how transformational leadership creates a motivating and encouraging atmosphere. By addressing their concerns and encouraging a feeling of ownership, transformational leaders help staff members embrace the company vision and navigate the process

of change. As a result, resistance is reduced and change implementation is more successful. Interestingly, the observation revealed that team members active engagement and participation is pivotal for the successful implementation of change. The significance of employee involvement in the transition process is also emphasized by the existing literature. The observation showed that employees' resistance to change reduces and their level of commitment to the project rises when they are actively involved in the process. This is consistent with the findings of Burnes (2004) and Armenakis & Bedeian (1999) whose studies found that employee participation increases employees' willingness to support change initiatives by fostering a sense of ownership and belonging. Early team involvement by project managers not only reduces resistance but also gives workers the confidence to participate in the change process, promoting easier transitions and better results.

The observations also revealed that availability of training and development initiatives work towards reducing change resistance. The observations revealed that resistance levels are often lower when project managers provide training programs by assisting team members in learning new skills and adjusting to change. This research supports the work of Kotter (1996) and Nadler & Tushman (1989) that training gives team members the skills required to deal skillfully with change. Project managers may reduce uncertainty and boost trust in the change process by addressing the skills gap and preparing team members for the changes. In addition to that, observation also revealed that the manager's role as a change agent is important. Hence, managing resistance is directly improved by project managers who take on the role of change agents. Our findings indicate that project managers who adopt the position of change agents facilitate communication, offer direction, and deal with resistance as it appears to make transitions go more smoothly. Hence, we oppose the work of Barrett (2021), who argued that project manager cannot be a change agent. On the other hand, our observation supports the work of Lunenburg (2010) and Caldwell (2003), confirming the need of change agents in ensuring that change projects are carried out successfully. In addition to offering the required guidance and assistance, change agents cultivate an environment of candor and openness among staff members, which lessens opposition and makes it easier for change to be successfully adopted. Observation also supports the work of Kaur & Ferreira-Sutherland (2024) that training enables employees to embrace change.

Findings from observations also revealed that project managers employ a range of tactics, such as assistance, education, and negotiation, to overcome resistance. The creativity of employees reduces in case of no guidance (Faizan et al., 2022). One important tactic for getting over resistance was to utilize negotiation to address issues and make concessions, as well as to give emotional and informational support. This supports the findings of Kotter & Schlesinger (2008) that applying these tactics can reduce conflict and promote teamwork. Project managers being adaptative and sensitive to resistance may modify their strategies to address issues, which lowers opposition and boosts change acceptability. In addition to that, observation revealed that cultural knowledge is important to overcome resistance during change. It became clear that controlling resistance required cultural sensitivity. Observations revealed that project managers with cultural awareness and knowledge are more effective in overcoming opposition. They can understand the values and views of the stakeholders. This is consistent with the work of Schein (1992) and Cameron & Quinn (2006) work that emphasize on how crucial it is to understand corporate culture to manage change. By addressing resistance in a way that respects organizational norms, a project manager's ability to handle cultural dynamics makes the change process more seamless and palatable.

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Another important discovery from observations was that the use of feedback systems to collect opinions and concerns from team members on the process of change is essential. It is observed that employees feel more engaged and felt being heard when project managers establish channels for continuous input, which reduces resistance. This is aligned with the work of Kotter (1996) and Armenakis et al. (1993), indicating that the importance of feedback in improving the change process and promptly resolving new issues. Additionally, feedback methods offer a chance for ongoing enhancement, guaranteeing that the process of change is swift. Additionally, our observation revealed that there are lower levels of resistance found to be linked with project managers' emotional intelligence. Observations showed that project managers with high emotional intelligence are more adept at recognizing and resolving team problems, which helps in controlling and overpowering resistance. This result is aligned with the work of Goleman (1995) and Clarke (2010) that emotional intelligence is crucial for resolving opposition during organizational transformation and managing interpersonal interactions. Thus, it could be narrated that emotionally intelligent project managers may successfully lead change initiatives and overcome resistance by demonstrating empathy, self-awareness, and social skills. Lastly, the observations showed that a key tactic for handling opposition (resistance) was evaluating change readiness. Project managers are better able to foresee any opposition and deal proactively with it when they evaluate an organization's preparedness for change. This supports the research of Holt et al. (2007) and Armenakis et al. (1993), highlighting the significance of determining change readiness to lessen resistance. Perhaps project managers can create focused plans to solve certain issues before they worsen by seeing possible opposition early on.

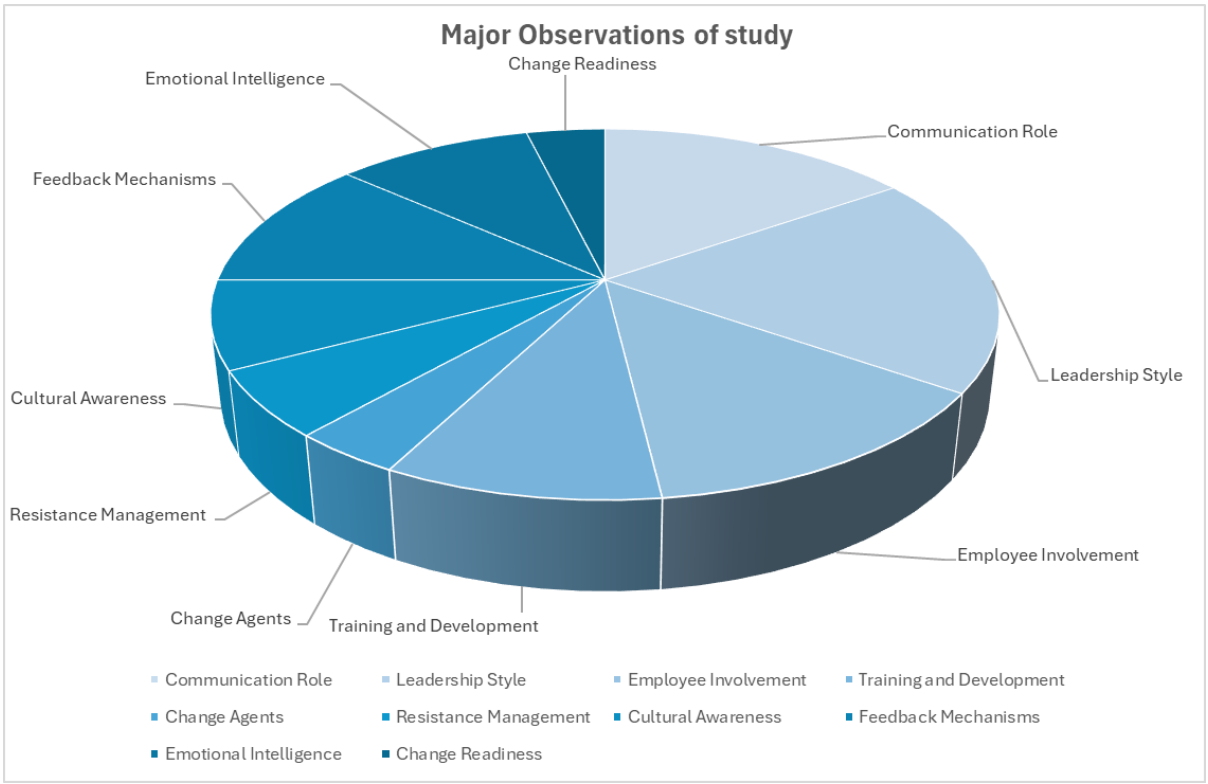

Figure 2: *author's illustration of major findings driven from observation*

The observational results of this study add to and validate previous research on the project manager's function in handling resistance and change. Project managers use a variety of tactics, including training, employee participation, communication, leadership style, and emotional

intelligence, all of which are in accordance with the best practices found in the literature at hand on change management. However, communication is the most important factor, followed by leadership, employee engagement, feedback mechanism, training and development, and so on (Figure 2). Overcoming resistance requires flexibility and adaptation because every business has different problems that call for different approaches. Although, if these tactics work, it's crucial to remember that their effectiveness varies depending on the situation. Implementing the best 'change management' techniques required project managers to be able to evaluate the requirements of their teams and organizations. Effective leadership, communication, feedback, and training may all greatly lower resistance and increase the likelihood that a project will be completed successfully.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, project managers play a pivotal role in navigating change and managing resistance within organizations. While existing theories offer valuable insights, their practical application requires flexibility and adaptation to the unique contexts of each project. Effective communication, leadership, employee involvement, training, change agents, resistance management strategies, cultural awareness, feedback mechanisms, emotional intelligence, and change readiness assessments emerge as key factors in successful change initiatives. By embracing a holistic and contextual approach, project managers can enhance the quality of change processes and increase the likelihood of successful implementation and adoption.

In the future, project managers must acknowledge the limitations of current theories and frameworks Reflecting the dynamic and intricate characteristics of organizational change. Subsequent research should prioritize the development of more adaptable models to address the diverse challenges faced in real-world change initiatives. Additionally, highlighting the significance of emotional intelligence and cultural awareness in change management training programs for project managers can improve their ability to navigate resistance effectively. Furthermore, organizations should give priority to establishing strong feedback mechanisms and investing in change readiness assessments to proactively identify and handle sources of resistance. Through continuous evolution and refinement of their approaches based on emerging best practices and lessons learned, project managers can enhance their effectiveness in leading successful change initiatives and contributing to organizational resilience in the face of change.

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The Evolution of Adaptive Leadership in Project Management: Innovation, Agility, and Strategic Transformation

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Abstract
Effective leadership is a critical determinant of project success, influencing team performance, innovation, and strategic growth. This paper examines the evolution of modern leadership, emphasizing shared leadership, agile methodologies, and AI-driven digital integration within project management. As organizations navigate increasing complexity and uncertainty, transformational and situational leadership styles have emerged as key drivers of collaboration, resilience, and strategic decision-making. The adoption of agile methodologies and digital transformation has further reshaped project leadership, demanding greater adaptability, ethical decision-making, and cross-functional collaboration. Case studies of Tesla, Amazon, PayPal, Magna International, and Ventana Construction Corporation illustrate how organizations leverage hybrid project management frameworks to balance agility and structure oversight in diverse industries.

Keywords: *AI, agile project management, leadership, digital transformation, innovation, strategy, leadership behavior*

JEL Classification: M10, M15, M54, O31, O32

Introduction

Project management has evolved from hierarchical, top-down structures to adaptive, collaborative leadership models that emphasize agility, innovation, and shared decision-making (Jesuthasan & Kapilashrami, 2024). Shared leadership, as highlighted by the Project Management Institute (PMI), distributes authority across teams, fostering resilience, strategic alignment, and continuous learning in fast-changing environments (PMI, 2021). Modern project leaders must navigate digital transformation, agile adoption, and remote team dynamics (Kaur et al., 2024), balancing stakeholder engagement, risk management, and operational efficiency (Urbański et al., 2019). Organizations such as Tesla, Amazon, PayPal, Magna International, and Ventana Construction Corporation illustrate how adaptive leadership and hybrid project management frameworks

enhance decision-making, innovation, and responsiveness in complex industries. To remain competitive, leaders must integrate AI-driven analytics, behavioral leadership strategies, and hybrid methodologies that blend agile flexibility with structured oversight. By fostering open communication, leveraging team strengths, and embracing ethical leadership, project managers can drive long-term success in dynamic, high-performance environments (Jesuthasan & Kapilashrami, 2024).

Despite advancements in project management leadership, many organizations struggle to transition from traditional hierarchical models to more adaptive, innovation-driven approaches. The rigidity of outdated leadership structures often hinders flexibility, decision-making, and responsiveness in dynamic project environments. This research identifies critical leadership behaviors that drive project success and explores how adaptive leadership approaches, hybrid methodologies, and AI-enhanced project management strategies improve team performance, stakeholder collaboration, and organizational outcomes.

This study contributes to the growing body of research on adaptive leadership in project management, emphasizing the increasing importance of agility, digital transformation, and behavioral leadership strategies. By analyzing leadership models in companies such as Tesla, Amazon, PayPal, Magna International, and Ventana Construction Corporation, this research highlights best practices that enhance project efficiency, team collaboration, and strategic innovation. The study's findings provide valuable insights for project managers navigating hybrid project management environments, helping organizations refining leadership approaches to drive competitive advantage and long-term success. Thus, this study aims to investigate the role of adaptive leadership strategies, agile methodologies and AI-driven digital transformation to optimize project success.

Literature Review

Behavioral Leadership Development in Project Teams

Recent studies emphasize the significance of behavioral leadership development in project teams, highlighting key factors that influence project success. Effective project leadership extends beyond technical skills and requires behavioral competencies that enhance team collaboration, adaptability, and strategic execution. A 2024 study identified several interrelated leadership behaviors that contribute to project effectiveness (Table 1).

Table 1: Key Behavioral Leadership Factors in Project Teams

Leadership Factor	**Description**
Effective Communication	Establishing clear, transparent communication channels within the team and with stakeholders to ensure alignment and information flow (Jesuthasan & Kapilashrami, 2024)
Strategic Thinking	Anticipating challenges and aligning project goals with organizational strategy to maintain a forward-thinking approach (Southgate, 2025)
Adaptability	Demonstrating flexibility and proactive responsiveness to unexpected changes in the project environment (Mirkhan et al., 2024)
Delegation and Empowerment	Empowering team members by assigning clear responsibilities and fostering decision-making capabilities (Betti et al., 2024)

Team Collaboration	Encouraging teamwork and mutual support to enhance project efficiency and collective problem-solving (Donahue, 2023)
Technological Integration	Utilizing digital tools and AI-driven project management platforms to improve efficiency and streamline workflows (Musawir et al., 2024)
Agile Methodologies	Applying flexible and iterative project management techniques to optimize project execution (Jesuthasan & Kapilashrami, 2024)

Source: *author's illustration based on systematic review*

Project managers who effectively implement these leadership strategies are more likely to drive successful outcomes. A critical early step in project execution involves clearly defining individual roles and responsibilities while aligning them with the project's strategic direction (Southgate, 2025). Leaders play a pivotal role in fostering a collaborative environment, ensuring the availability of essential resources, promoting knowledge sharing, and maintaining open communication with both team members and stakeholders. By embedding behavioral leadership principles into project management practices, organizations can enhance team performance, mitigate risks, and achieve sustainable project success.

Agile Leadership for Modern Project Management

Modern project management is increasingly adopting agile methodologies, emphasizing adaptability, responsiveness, and iterative problem-solving. Laufer et al. (2015) introduced the "Fast/Flexible" project management concept, highlighting key agile leadership traits: flexibility, responsiveness, and collaborative communication (Jesuthasan & Kapilashrami, 2024). These qualities enable project managers to make informed decisions, build high-performing teams, and drive organizational agility, particularly in fast-paced, technology-driven environments. Developing agile leadership competencies is crucial for fostering innovation, efficiency, and long-term project success. Effective leadership now requires strategic communication, adaptability, delegation, and the integration of technology to manage complexity (Betti et al., 2024; Musawir et al., 2024). As digital transformation accelerates, project managers must leverage AI, data-driven decision-making, and remote collaboration tools to maintain strategic alignment and competitiveness (Betti et al., 2024).

The Qualitative Paradigm

The qualitative research paradigm provides a comprehensive lens for understanding leadership development and agile methodologies within project management. Rooted in interpretivism, this approach emphasizes the exploration of leadership behaviors, decision-making processes, and team dynamics in real-world project environments. Given the principles-based evolution of PMI's PMBOK® Guide (Seventh Edition) and the increasing adoption of agile methodologies, qualitative research enables a deeper analysis of how leadership strategies shape project outcomes and how leaders navigate complexity and change (PMI, 2021; Jesuthasan & Kapilashrami, 2024).

Research Methodology

A qualitative approach offers rich insights into the evolving landscape of leadership and agile project management. By focusing on lived experiences, leadership adaptation, and team interactions, this paradigm bridges the gap between theoretical frameworks and practical applications, providing a nuanced understanding of how project managers drive strategic success in an Agile-driven world.

Case Study Analysis: Leadership Adaptability in Various Industries

Adaptive leadership is essential for thriving in a rapidly evolving global market. Tesla adapts its leadership to stay ahead in the electric vehicle industry (Tesla, 2023), while Amazon emphasizes decentralized decision-making to maintain its dominance in retail and cloud services (Amazon, 2023). PayPal navigates leadership evolution in digital payments (PayPal, 2023), and Magna International integrates adaptive strategies into its global automotive operations (Magna, 2023). Ventana Construction Corporation, a small construction firm, showcases adaptability through project-based leadership (Magna International, 2023). These companies illustrate the importance of flexible leadership in technology, finance, and construction sectors.

Findings and Discussions

This section contains findings and discussion based on secondary sources.

Table 2: Leadership Flexibility Evolution

Company	Leadership Approach in 2020	Leadership Changes (2021-2025)	Success Metric (Projects)	Challenges Faced	Result
Tesla	Top-down, centralized leadership	More decentralized decision-making, empowering engineers	85% of projects completed on time	Supply chain disruptions, scaling production	High success in innovation and scaling (Tesla, 2023)
Amazon	Hierarchical, data-driven decision-making	Focus on decentralized teams and leadership autonomy	90% of projects met goals	Labor challenges, fulfillment bottlenecks	Very successful, rapid adaptation to market (Amazon, 2023)
PayPal	Command and Control	Increased focus on collaboration and agility	70% of projects met deadlines	Regulatory changes, cybersecurity challenges	Moderate success with room for improvement (PayPal, 2023)
Magna International	Traditional automotive leadership	Cross-functional teams, introduction of innovation hubs	60% of projects met goals	Global supply chain issues, market fluctuations	Struggled but improving with adaptive leadership (Magna, 2023)
Ventana Construction Corporation	Hands-on leadership with centralized decision-making	Shift towards collaborative and flexible project management	80% of projects met goals	Budget constraints, adapting to agile principles	Significant improvement in efficiency and team adaptability

Source: *author's own illustration based on systematic review*

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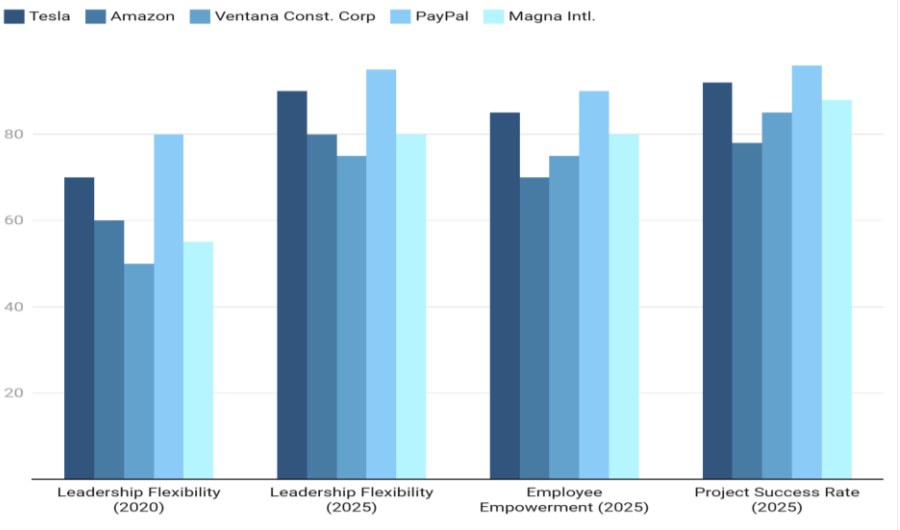

Figure 1: *Leadership Flexibility Evolution*

Adaptive leadership enhances agility and innovation, particularly in fast-changing industries. Tesla and Amazon leverage decentralized decision-making for efficiency, though challenges like supply chain disruptions (Tesla, Magna) and regulatory constraints (PayPal) impact adaptability. SMEs like Ventana Construction benefit from agile project management, fostering collaboration. To sustain success, companies should invest in leadership development, tailor adaptive strategies to industry needs, and promote cross-functional collaboration. Agile methodologies thrive in Tesla's vehicle design and Amazon's logistics but face scaling challenges at PayPal and Magna (Tesla, 2023; Amazon, 2023; PayPal, 2023; Magna, 2023; Figure 1; Table 2).

Table 3: Agile Success vs. Adoption Rate

Company	**Agile Adoption Rate (2025)**	**Success Rate (2025)**	**ROI (2025)**	**Challenges**
Tesla	85%	80%	30%	Resistance to change in legacy teams
Amazon	70%	65%	15%	Lack of leadership support
Ventana Construction Corp.	90%	85%	40%	Integrating agile into traditional construction workflows
PayPal	95%	90%	45%	Minimal challenges due to small team size
Magna International	75%	80%	30%	Scaling agile across global teams

Source: *adapted from agile Success vs. adoption Rate (2025)*

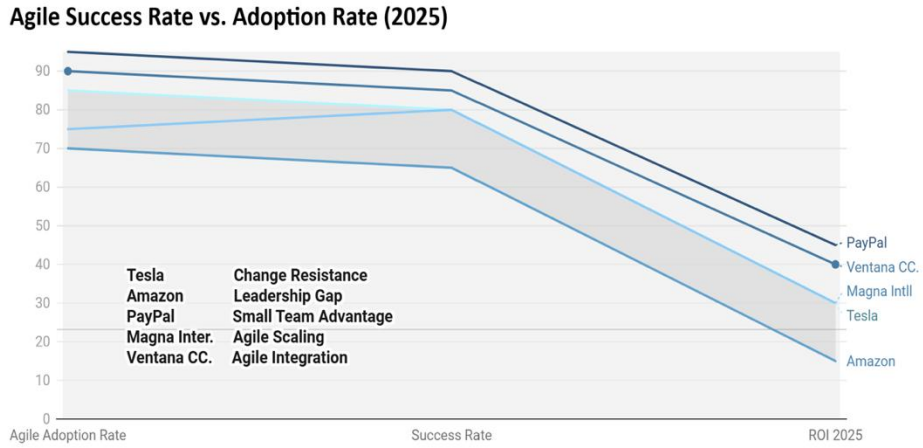

Figure 2: *representing agile success vs. adoption rate & challenges (2025)*

Agile methodologies have proven effective across technology, finance, and construction but face adoption challenges. Tesla and Amazon leverage agile but must enhance change management to overcome resistance and leadership gaps (Mbarek, 2024). PayPal succeeds with agile due to its collaborative culture and small, focused teams, while Ventana Construction Corporation applies agile effectively in construction with room for optimization. Magna International should pilot Agile programs before scaling globally. Successful project management requires adaptability, influence, and strategic leadership (Mirkhan et al., 2024), emphasizing trust-building and innovation to align projects with long-term goals (PMI, 2021; Kotter, 2004; Donahue, 2023; Figure 2; Table 3).

Table 4: Differences Between Manager Focus and Leadership Focus

Aspect	**Managerial Focus**	**Leadership Focus**
Orientation	Task-driven	Vision-driven
Approach	Efficiency & control	Empowerment & collaboration
Decision-Making	Rule-based	Innovation-driven
Motivation	Performance-based incentives	Inspiration & shared purpose
Risk Perspective	Risk avoidance	Risk as opportunity
Outcome	Bottom line (efficiency, cost control)	Topline (growth, vision, and innovation)

Source: *author's own illustration based on systematic review*

Tesla, under Elon Musk's leadership, exemplifies agile decision-making and cross-functional collaboration, prioritizing rapid innovation over traditional project management. This approach has driven advancements in electric vehicle technology, showcasing agility in modern business. The comparison in Table 4 demonstrated different aspects of managerial and leadership focus. The Management by Walking Around (MBWA) method fosters engagement, transparency, and trust through direct leader-team interactions. While video conferencing is essential for virtual teams, personalized engagement strategies are crucial for maintaining motivation and alignment with business goals (Donahue, 2023; Jesuthasan & Kapilashrami, 2024). When effectively implemented, MBWA enhances communication, problem-solving, and continuous improvement (Southgate, 2025).

Key Leadership Roles in Project Management

Successful project management requires a structured leadership approach that balances people-oriented leadership with task-focused management. This strategic breakdown ensures leaders can effectively manage teams, align project goals, and foster resilience in dynamic business environments (Table 5).

Table 5: The essential leadership roles and responsibilities in project execution

Leadership Focus	Project Manager Responsibilities	Key Skills Required
Reactive People Leadership	Plan and define project scope	Decision-making, team motivation
Reactive Task Management	Estimate and allocate resources	Vision-sharing, risk assessment
Proactive People Leadership	Communication with stakeholders & teams	Collaboration, adaptability
Proactive Task Management	Review and monitor progress	Project planning, task prioritization
Maintaining Project Health	Manage resources and risk	Leadership by example, problem-solving
Conflict Resolution	Address team disputes and align priorities	Emotional intelligence, negotiation

Source: *author's own illustration based on systematic review*

Developing and Managing High-Performance Project Teams

Building high-performance teams is crucial for project success, following key development phases: forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning (Betti et al., 2024). Leaders must adapt strategies for hybrid and remote work settings (Jesuthasan & Kapilashrami, 2024). Tesla enhances collaboration through agile team structures in its fast-paced environment (Musk, 2023), while Ventana Construction Corporation applies flexible leadership to manage both on-site and remote teams. Effective leadership requires situational adaptability, leveraging intellectual leadership theories to drive performance and accountability, particularly in dynamic work environments (PMI, 2023).

The Evolution of Virtual Leadership in the Post-Pandemic Era

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the rise of virtual teams, with remote work adoption jumping from 3.4% to 43% by April 2020 (Jones, 2023). Amazon leveraged AI-driven project management and cloud collaboration tools to support remote teams (Jassy, 2023), while Magna International adopted hybrid work structures to balance remote flexibility with in-person collaboration for engineering projects (Magna, 2024). Amid economic and political uncertainties, resilient leadership is essential (Jesuthasan & Kapilashrami, 2024). By integrating agile methodologies, strategic flexibility, and behavioral leadership, organizations can drive innovation and long-term success in the digital era (Betti et al., 2024; Table 6).

Table 6: Strategic Approaches to Overcoming Virtual Team Challenges

Challenge	Description	Leadership Strategy	Implementation
Poor	Miscommunication	Establish Clear	Define expectations for

Communication	due to lack of face-to-face interaction.	Communication Guidelines	response times and preferred tools.
Delegation Issues	Difficulty in assigning tasks and responsibilities remotely.	Create Structure & Accountability	Implement daily check-ins and project tracking mechanisms.
Work Ethic Differences	Varying levels of motivation and discipline among team members.	Encourage Transparent Performance Tracking	Use project management tools to monitor tasks and progress.
Work Ethic Differences	Varying levels of motivation and discipline among team members.	Encourage Transparent Performance Tracking	Use project management tools to monitor tasks and progress.
Lack of Personal Connection	Remote work can weaken team cohesion and camaraderie.	Foster Informal Communication & Team Bonding	Organize virtual team-building activities and informal chats.
Technology Barriers	Difficulty adapting to virtual collaboration tools.	Leverage Technology & Provide Training	Ensure all team members are proficient in using digital tools.
Time Zone Differences	Scheduling challenges due to distributed teams.	Implement Flexible Work Schedules	Allow asynchronous communication and set overlapping work hours.

Source: *author's own illustration based on systematic review*

Project Management Leadership Facets

Effective leadership is essential in project management, influencing team performance and project success (Amanchukwu, Stanley, & Ololube, 2015). The Situational Leadership Theory by Hersey and Blanchard (2022) stresses the need for leaders to adapt their style based on team maturity and project complexity, highlighting the importance of flexibility in leadership approaches.

Leadership Styles in Project Management

Project leadership focuses on creating a productive and collaborative work environment, fostering communication, and driving motivation. Various leadership styles contribute to project success, each with unique advantages and applications. The PMI (2021) has categorized leadership styles commonly applied in project environments. These styles and their characteristics are detailed in Table 7.

Table 7: Leadership Styles for Project Management

Leadership Style	**Key Characteristics**	**Best Suited For**
Coercive	Demands immediate compliance; directive	Crisis situations, urgent project turnarounds
Authoritative	Mobilizes team towards a vision; inspires confidence	Projects requiring strategic direction and innovation
Affiliative	Builds emotional bonds; fosters harmony	Projects needing strong team collaboration

Democratic	Encourages participation; seeks input	Teams with experienced professionals needing consensus
Pacesetting	Sets high standards; expects excellence	High-performing, self-motivated teams
Coaching	Develops individuals for the future	Projects requiring skill development and mentorship

Source: *adapted from PMI (2021)*

Leadership in an Adaptive Project Environment

Adaptive project environments require leaders to integrate both predictive and agile methodologies to drive success (PMI, 2021). The PMBOK Guide (Seventh Edition) highlights the importance of situational awareness, emotional intelligence, and agility in managing complex projects. Leaders must understand project risks and team dynamics (Smith, & Johnson, 2024), leverage empathy to foster engagement (Mersino, 2022), and make timely, informed decisions in response to evolving conditions (Trigg, 2022; Table 8).

Table 8: Benefits of Situational Leadership in Project Management

Benefit	**Explanation**
Flexibility	Allow project leaders to adapt their approach based on team & project needs
Enhanced Collaboration	Encourages effective communication and teamwork
Increased Productivity	Aligns leadership style with team maturity for optimal efficiency
Improved Decision-Making	Enables leaders to make informed choices based on project context
Higher Employee Engagement	Motivate teams through personalized support and guidance

Source: *adapted from Yesodharan & Mohan (2021)*

The Most Common Project Management Pitfalls to Avoid

Effective project management is key to achieving successful outcomes, but even experienced managers face challenges that can hinder progress. Identifying and addressing common pitfalls can improve efficiency, stakeholder satisfaction, and overall success. Companies like Tesla, Amazon, and Magna International have adopted strategic practices to overcome these challenges, ensuring innovation and operational excellence. The table below outlines frequent project management challenges and strategies for mitigating them (Table 9).

Table 9: Common Project Management Pitfalls and Mitigation Strategies

Pitfall	**Description**	**Mitigation Strategy**
Poorly Defined Goals	Ambiguous project objectives lead to confusion and misalignment.	Engage stakeholders early to establish clear, measurable goals. Ensure all team members understand and align with these objectives.
Scope Creep	Uncontrolled expansion of project scope without corresponding adjustments in resources or timelines.	Implement a robust change management process. Evaluate the impact of changes on scope, budget, and schedule before approval.

Inadequate Risk Management	Failure to identify and mitigate potential project risks.	Conduct comprehensive risk assessments during planning. Develop contingency plans and regularly review risk factors.
Insufficient Communication	Lack of effective information sharing among stakeholders and team members.	Establish clear communication channels. Schedule regular updates and ensure transparency throughout the project lifecycle.
Unrealistic Deadlines	Setting impractical timelines that pressure the team and compromise quality.	Develop schedules based on resource availability and task complexity. Incorporate buffers for unforeseen delays.
Lack of Stakeholder Engagement	Minimal involvement of stakeholders, leading to misaligned expectations.	Engage stakeholders from the project's inception. Maintain regular communication to align objectives and gather feedback.
Neglecting Quality Assurance	Overlooking quality checks, resulting in subpar deliverables.	Integrate quality assurance processes throughout the project. Conduct regular reviews and testing to maintain standards.

Source: *adapted from Hansen & Jenkins (2023)*

Leading companies actively mitigate project risks through structured management strategies. Amazon prevents scope creep with strict change management protocols, ensuring modifications align with business goals (Jassy, 2023). Tesla leverages AI-driven analytics to anticipate production and supply chain disruptions, reducing delays (Musk, 2023). Magna International enforces rigorous quality control, enhancing manufacturing success rates (Magna, 2024). Research highlights the effectiveness of brainstorming, “what-if” analysis, and root cause analysis in risk mitigation (Younes, 2024). Additionally, integrating quality assurance frameworks improves efficiency, particularly in product development (Ahmed, 2024). These strategies enhance project success, team efficiency, and stakeholder satisfaction.

Project Manager Leadership Behavior

The debate over whether leaders are born or made has evolved from focusing on inherent traits to emphasizing leadership behaviors (Amanchukwu, Stanley, & Ololube, 2015). Lewin et al. (1939) categorized leaders as autocratic or democratic, highlighting their impact on team dynamics. Modern research links leadership behaviors to project success, with studies confirming that strong leadership directly enhances performance (Liu & Lin, 2023; Müller, 2023). Tesla’s Elon Musk exemplifies transformational leadership through innovation, while Amazon’s Jeff Bezos combined transformational and transactional strategies to drive growth. Effective leadership sustains motivation, decision-making, and long-term success.

Impact of Leadership Styles on Project Outcomes

A comprehensive study by Altaher et al. (2024) analyzed the effects of various leadership styles on project success, with a focus on the mediating role of team collaboration (see Table 10).

Table 10: Common Project Management Pitfalls and Mitigation Strategies

Leadership Style	Direct Impact on Project Success	Impact on Team Collaboration	Mediating Role of Team Collaboration
Transformational	Positive	Positive	Yes
Transactional	Positive	Positive	Yes
Laissez-faire	Negative	Negative	No

Source: adapted from Altaher et al. (2024).

Transformational and transactional leadership enhance project success by improving collaboration, while laissez-faire leadership negatively affects team dynamics. Tesla's transformational approach drives innovation, while Amazon's blend of both styles ensures efficiency and customer focus. High-performance teams rely on shared vision, trust, and communication (Jenkins, 2024). Amazon and Magna International use strategic frameworks to monitor team performance and foster innovation (Jassy, 2023; Magna, 2024). Leadership communication, comprising 70%-to-90% of a leader's time, is critical for alignment, requiring transparency, emotional intelligence, and feedback (Barker & Gower, 2023). Effective communication strengthens collaboration, as seen in Tesla, Amazon, and Ventana Construction (Musk, 2023; Jassy, 2023).

Table 11: Effective Leadership Communication Strategies

Strategy	Description
Embrace Transparency	Leaders share information openly to build trust and keep team members informed.
Practice Active Listening	Engaging with team members' input fosters a culture of respect and collaboration.
Provide Constructive Feedback	Offering timely and specific feedback helps individuals grow and align with organizational goals.
Utilize Multiple Communication Channels	Employing various platforms ensures messages reach all team members effectively.
Maintain Consistency in Messaging	Consistent communication reinforces organizational values and reduces confusion.
Encourage Open Dialogue	Creating an environment where team members feel safe to express ideas leads to innovation.
Adapt Communication Styles	Tailoring messages to different audiences ensures clarity and engagement.
Lead by Example	Demonstrating desired behaviors and communication practices sets a standard for the team.

Source: adapted from Luthra & Dahiya (2015)

Table 11 reflects project managers act as change agents, facilitating new strategies and helping organizations embrace change for successful outcomes (Müller, 2023). Effective change management requires understanding how change impacts both individual and collective dynamics, with adaptable organizations facing less disruption (Smith & Roberts, 2022). Project managers guide this process like conductors, harmonizing project elements for success. Additionally, using tools like Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems enables project managers to drive change while preparing team members to manage these advancements (Liu & Lin, 2023).

Table 12: Sources of Conflict Across Project Life Cycle Stages

Stages	Sources of conflicts

Defining Stage	Priorities, procedures, and schedules.
Planning Stage	Priorities, schedule, procedures, technical issues, and workforce challenges.
Executing Stage	Schedule, technical issues, workforce challenges, and priorities.
Delivery Stage	The schedule is the primary source of conflict.

Source: adapted from Liu & Lin (2023)

Staying up-to-updated with trends and technology is crucial for project success (PMI, 2023; Table 12). Ethical leadership, like Amazon's focus on sustainability, drives corporate integrity (Katzenbach & Smith, 2023; Amazon, 2023). Agile methodologies promote collaboration and innovation, helping teams prioritize tasks (Yin & Liu, 2023). Effective stakeholder communication aligns expectations, as seen with Tesla and PayPal (Tesla, 2023; PayPal, 2023). Shared leadership and agile enhance flexibility and innovation (Betti et al., 2024; Jesuthasan & Kapilashrami, 2024), with AI tools guiding decision-making (PMI, 2021). Future leadership focuses on technology, hybrid models, and sustainability (Watts, 2023), while agile requires cultural shifts (Smith & Johnson, 2022).

Conclusion

Project management leadership is evolving toward adaptability, collaboration, and technology integration. Agile and Scrum have worked well in IT and digital industries but face challenges in manufacturing and construction due to inconsistent implementation. Companies like Tesla, Amazon, and PayPal show how hybrid models balance flexibility and structure while supporting digital transformation. Misapplication of agile can cause inefficiencies, particularly in compliance-heavy industries. As AI and digital tools evolve, they will optimize project management, improve decision-making, and enhance efficiency. Future research should focus on AI-driven optimization and adapting agile to different industries. AI's integration will redefine project management by improving flexibility, collaboration, and execution.

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The Multifaceted Impact of Discrimination: Psychological, Social, and Economic Consequences

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Abstract
The article examines the impact of discrimination on individuals' wellbeing and performance of businesses across the globe to assess the profound impact of psychological, social, and economic on individuals and businesses. We used empirical data, real-world cases, and theoretical frameworks to understand the origin, nature, attributes, and consequences of discriminatory practices. Thus, it broadens phenomena of understanding specific discriminations and discriminatory actions encountered by individuals and groups within social interaction. It explores the social and economic impacts resulting from such discrimination, calling for business ethics. The article calls for actions to bring major systemic reforms, inclusive workplace policies, and technological advancements to combat discrimination and promote equity. Through a comprehensive analysis, this study aims to provide actionable insights for policymakers, organizational leaders, and society at large to foster inclusive environments and sustainable growth.

Keywords: *Discrimination, psychological impact, socioeconomic restrictions, workplace equity, policy reform*

JEL Classification: J71, J78, IM14

Introduction

According to Ikpene (2020), discrimination is defined as the treatment, consideration, or distinction made in favor of or against a person or thing on the basis of prejudiced factors, including but not limited to race, religion, gender, cultural equivalencies, disability, age, or functional

capacity. Discrimination is also influenced by prejudices or stereotypes that support social systems. If any meaningful progress is to be achieved toward the equality of citizens and societies, prejudice must be addressed immediately, even in the face of advancements in the law on fairness in society and respect for rights.

The case study attempts to distinguish between the many types of discrimination, examine those types, their causes, and their impacts, and provide potential solutions to this issue. The purpose of the paper is to outline the people, methods, and outcomes of the fight against these practices. By realizing how serious the issue is, people and organizations will be able to take the necessary steps to guarantee safe working conditions. To give a comprehensive picture of discrimination, the theoretical portion is supported by empirical data gathered from numerous cases, policies, and scholarly arguments.

This article focuses on three main types of discrimination: gender, age, and disability. As a result, the focus is on analyzing the three main types. Even though there are numerous varieties, their scope is limited to three because of their widespread occurrence, substantial social influence, and applicability to workplace dynamics. It looks at the effects on people and organizations that are psychological, social, and economic. By fusing case studies, empirical data, and legal frameworks, the research offers a thorough understanding of discrimination. Additionally, it looks at how socioeconomic factors fuel inequality and evaluates potential solutions including legislative reforms and technological advancements.

Millions of individuals around the world are still affected by discrimination, which is a significant barrier to social and economic progress. By examining the many facets of inclusion and equity, this article adds to the current conversation on these topics. It so provides useful recommendations for how society, corporations, and laws might effectively counteract prejudice. The study highlights the need of creating inclusive workplaces to enhance both human well-being and organizational success.

Although there are major improvements in anti-discrimination and civil rights legislation, structural prejudices still impede social and economic progression. The World Bank (2021) estimates that discrimination costs the world economy up to $160 trillion in lost human capital, highlighting how urgent it is to solve this problem. Hence, reflecting the importance of this article.

Age, gender, and disability are the three primary forms of prejudice that are investigated in this study. It examines the psychological, social, and financial effects of discrimination on employees and businesses using case studies and empirical data. Additionally, the case study evaluates the efficacy of the existing legislative frameworks and offers practical solutions to advance fairness and inclusion. By addressing these issues, this piece hopes to add to the ongoing conversations on discrimination and provide useful recommendations for the public, private sector, and legislators.

Types of Discrimination

Gender-Age-Disability

In this section, three distinct types of discrimination evident at the workplace are discussed. Although there are several other types, this section explores the most common ones with the practical (real-world) examples and the acts that were violated by big corporations. Below is the framework to show the type of discrimination affecting the different considered attributes (Figure 1). A plethora of research confirmed that employees, their work performance, business

performance, the workplace operations, business reputations, and motivation are affected by distinct types of discrimination.

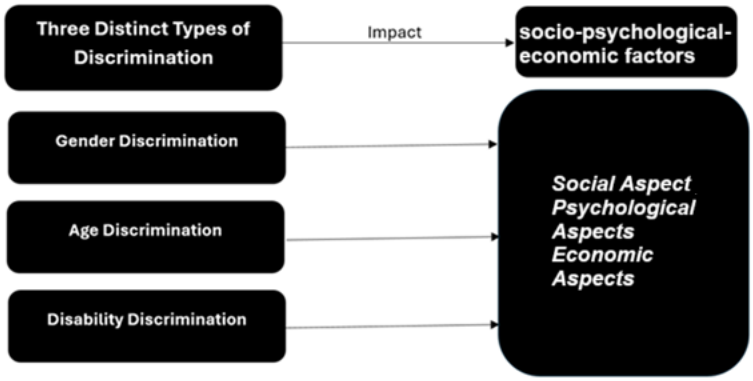

Figure 1: *Conceptual Framework - Three Distinct Types affecting socio-psychological-economic factors*

Gender Discrimination

Men and non-binary individuals are not free of gender discrimination despite most of its impact on women. The discrimination exists in several ways including the unfair gender pay where women are paid less for the same positions occupied by men, and the lack of women and other non-binary persons in decision-making roles in industries. Along this line, workplace harassment suggests the presence of more deeply seated social flaws where one's promotion is hindered because one's work environment is hostile. Such challenges emphasize just how far away gender equity still is. As discussed earlier also that at the workplace, gender discrimination—especially against women and non-binary people—remains a major obstacle. For every dollar earned by males, women make around 82 cents, and the disparity is worse for women of color (Hegewisch & Williams-Baron, 2018). With only 8% of Fortune 500 CEOs being female, this inequality is made worse by the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions (Catalyst, 2023).

#MeToo has had a remarkable influence in as far as awareness on gender oppression as well as sexual harassment perpetration is concerned and urging actions against such abuse, which has encouraged both women and men to come out of abuse and injustices. Studies show that 38% of women have experienced sexual harassment at work, leading to increased anxiety, depression, and job turnover (National Sexual Violence Resource Center, 2021). Although laws like the Civil Rights Act of 1964's Title VII aim to address these issues, their inconsistent implementation emphasizes the need for stronger policies and cultural shifts. These are steps in the right direction, though not every desire has been achieved. Reforming laws as well as systems and practice as pain transparency gets enforced, leadership developed diverse populations at workplaces and established an office where everyone is free to work is what is needed most (Johnson and Patel, 2021). Nonetheless, breaking different stereotypes will call for struggle such as changing policies, values in the society and active support for changing the behavior of some trends for a society of equal opportunities.

While gender discrimination mostly affects women, it also affects men and non-binary people. Inequitable gender pay, when women are paid less for the same jobs held by males, and the underrepresentation of women and other non-binary people in positions of decision-making within industries are just two examples of the various ways discrimination occurs. Accordingly, when a person's advancement is impeded due to a hostile work environment, workplace harassment

indicates the existence of deeper social defects. These difficulties highlight how far gender equity has come. As was previously said, gender discrimination, particularly against women and non-binary individuals, continues to be a significant barrier in the workplace. Women make about 82 cents for every dollar made by men, and the gap is much more pronounced for women of color (Hegewisch & Williams-Baron, 2018). The underrepresentation of women in leadership roles exacerbates this imbalance, as only 8% of Fortune 500 CEOs are female (Catalyst, 2023).

In terms of raising awareness of sexual harassment and gender inequality and calling for action against such abuse, #MeToo has had a tremendous impact. This has inspired both men and women to escape injustice and abuse. 38% of women have been sexually harassed at work, according to studies, which has been linked to higher rates of anxiety, depression, and job turnover (National Sexual Violence Resource Center, 2021). Even if Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and other legislation attempt to address these problems, their uneven application highlights the need for more robust regulations and cultural changes. Even though not all of the desires have been fulfilled, these are positive steps. What is most required is the reform of laws, procedures, and practices as well as the enforcement of suffering transparency; leadership should also cultivate varied populations in workplaces and create an office where everyone is free to work (Johnson and Patel, 2021). However, dispelling these prejudices will require work, including modifying laws and societal values as well as actively supporting the reversal of certain tendencies in order to create an equal opportunity society.

Age Discrimination (Ageism)

Ageism affects both older and younger workers, perpetuating stereotypes that hinder career growth. In other words, ageism has a detrimental impact on all age groups and favors neither the young nor the old socially. Due to their perceived lack of adaptability or technical proficiency, older workers are sometimes forced to retire early or have less opportunities for promotion (AARP, 2020). When it comes to older age workers, there is often a phenomenon called devaluation when older people are viewed as less capable or less likely to adapt to changes, thus facilitating elongation of their working in a more unfavorable condition, or even their earlier retirement. On the other hand, even if they have the necessary qualifications and skills, younger employees are usually referred to be inexperienced (Anderson, 2020). It could be argued that young people are held back from achieving their potential in the workplace too – typically by being called inexperienced or under-skilled irrespective of the fact that their competencies and abilities are relevant and optimal (Anderson, 2020). These unequal expectations promote biases in the employment sector and hinder the professionals' growth or promotion purely because of age and not competence.

Legal frameworks like the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA) in the United States aim to protect against such discrimination by prohibiting age-based bias in hiring, promotions, and workplace policies. However, enforcement of age discrimination laws remains inconsistent across regions, leaving gaps in protection for many individuals (Smith & Lee, 2021). Addressing age discrimination requires both robust legal enforcement and cultural shifts to value diverse age perspectives in professional environments.

Both younger and older employees are impacted by ageism, which reinforces preconceptions that impede professional advancement. To put it another way, ageism negatively affects people of all ages and does not socially favor the young or the old. Older workers may be pushed to retire early or have less prospects for advancement because of their perceived lack of technical competency or flexibility (AARP, 2020). However, dispelling these prejudices will require work, including modifying laws and societal values as well as actively supporting the reversal of certain tendencies in order to create an equal opportunity society. When it comes to elderly workers, a phenomenon known as devaluation frequently occurs when they are perceived as less competent or less likely to adjust to changes, which allows them to continue working in less advantageous conditions or even retire earlier. Conversely, younger workers are typically referred to as inexperienced, even if they possess the requisite training and abilities (Anderson, 2020). One could argue that young individuals are also prevented from reaching their full potential in the job, usually by being labeled as inexperienced or under-skilled, even when their skills and competencies are ideal and relevant (Anderson, 2020).

In addition to impeding professionals' advancement due to age rather than skill, these unequal expectations foster biases in the workplace. In the United States, laws such as the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA) aims to protect against age-based bias in hiring, promotions, and workplace regulations in an effort to prevent this kind of discrimination. However, different jurisdictions continue to apply age discrimination legislation differently, which leaves many people without enough protection (Smith & Lee, 2021). Strong legal enforcement and cultural changes that appreciate a range of age perspectives in the workplace are both necessary to combat age discrimination.

Disability Discrimination

People with disabilities continue to face barriers from society, inadequate and insufficient accommodations, and societal stigma at work because of disability discrimination. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2023), only 21% of people with disabilities are employed, compared to 65% of their non-disabled peers. Legal frameworks like the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA) in the United States aim to protect against such discrimination by prohibiting age-based bias in hiring, promotions, and workplace policies. However, enforcement of age discrimination laws remains inconsistent across regions, leaving gaps in protection for many individuals (Smith & Lee, 2021). Lawsuits like EEOC v. UPS, in which the corporation neglected to give handicapped employees with alternative work schedules, demonstrate that compliance is still inconsistent (Scot Law Team, 2024). In addition to enforcing the law, addressing disability discrimination requires both robust legal enforcement and cultural shifts to value diverse age perspectives in professional environments.

Discrimination Against People with Disability due to disability discrimination, people with impairments still encounter social barriers, poor accommodations, and stigma in the workplace. Just 21% of individuals with disabilities are employed, compared to 65% of their peers without disabilities, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2023). In the United States, laws such as the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA) forbid age-based bias in hiring, promotions, and workplace regulations in an effort to prevent this kind of discrimination. However, different jurisdictions continue to apply age discrimination legislation differently, which leaves many people without enough protection (Smith & Lee, 2021).

Compliance is still uneven, as seen by lawsuits such as EEOC v. UPS, where the company failed

to provide disabled workers with alternate work schedules (Scot Law Team, 2024). Addressing handicap discrimination necessitates not just strict legal enforcement but also cultural changes that recognize different age viewpoints in the workplace.

Table 1: Cases of Discrimination and Acts

Types of Discrimination	Act	Example
Gender Discrimination	Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964	Walmart faced a major class-action lawsuit known as Dukes v. Wal-Mart), where Betty Duke (an employee) alleged unequal pay and promotions (Cotter, 2011; Court Case 338(2011).
Age Discrimination (Ageism)	Age Discriminatio n in Employment Act (ADEA) of 1967	IBM faced allegations of systematically pushing out older employees in favor of younger hires as part of a workforce reorganization. Sixteen senior employees went to court (Terrell, 2019; Gosselin, 2019).
Disability Discrimination	Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990	UPS was sued for not accommodating workers with disabilities, such as failing to provide modified work schedules or tasks. EEOC filed a lawsuit, and they reached out of court settlement (Scot Law Team, 2024; EEOC vs. UPS, 2009).

Source: *Own illustration based on secondary analysis*

Table 1 reflects the classic cases when organizations ignore the fundamental policies, laws and regulations, and prescribed acts. The consequences have a drastic adverse impact on the businesses (Table 1).

Psychological and Social Impacts

According to Williams and Mohammed (2013), discrimination has serious psychological and social repercussions and frequently results in long-term stress, anxiety, and depression. Social stigma and isolation are frequently experienced by marginalized people, and this worsens mental health issues. For instance, according to a study conducted by the American Psychological Association (APA, 2021), 45% of people who experienced discrimination and prejudice at work reported having depressive symptoms in comparison to 20% non-discriminated colleagues.

Discrimination restricts access to healthcare, employment, and education, which escalate social cycles of inequality. This reinforces systemic prejudices and discrimination by creating a feedback loop that further puts these vulnerable individuals at disadvantage, indicating strong systematic bias (World Health Organization, 2020).

Economic Impacts

Businesses, societies, and individuals - all suffer and are subjected to economic costs because of discrimination. Individuals suffer from limited career advancement, lost wages and increased healthcare expense due to stress and depression-related illnesses (Hegewisch & Williams-Baron, 2018). Discrimination by businesses results in lawsuits, harming their reputation, and decreased productivity. The financial risks of gender discrimination are evident in the case of Dukes vs. Wal-Mart as Walmart had to settle the lawsuit by giving $17.5 million as compensation (Cotter, 2011).

At a macroeconomic level, discrimination is a key factor in the decline in global GDP. Achieving gender parity might boost the world economy up to $12 trillion by 2025 (McKinsey World Institute, 2020). Addressing ageism and disability discrimination might also lead to substantial economic benefits, highlighting the necessity of structural changes and systematic reforms.

Legal and Policy Framework

Existing legislative frameworks extensively crucial for protections against discrimination include Title VII, the ADEA, and the ADA. Nevertheless, inconsistent enforcement and coverage gaps restrict their efficiency and effectiveness. For instance, Title VII stops discrimination based on gender, but it does not mention the intersectional discrimination against women of color experience (Crenshaw, 1989). To address these inequalities, policy shifts and structural reforms like mandatory diversity training sessions and transparency in hiring procedures are crucial components. Furthermore, biases in recruiting procedures might be reduced to some degree by adoption of technological advancements like AI-driven recruitment tools (World Economic Forum, 2022).

Conclusion

From the above three discussed types of discrimination, it is concluded that it is intentional attempt to create partial opinion and deprived individuals from their workplace rights. It is also concluded that discrimination is in different forms—such as race, gender, age, religion, or economic status. It adversely impacts the social well-being of the individuals as well as organization. Furthermore, legal issues might have a greater financial impact on a company; as a result, they also have an economic impact.

Discrimination has a greater detrimental impact on health, its psychological effects—such as social isolation, anxiety, and depression—highlight the urgent need for systemic change. Due to lost wages, reduced productivity, lawsuits, and other financial damage, discrimination costs businesses a significant amount of money, as evidenced by actual cases and settlements. Although legal frameworks like Title VII, ADEA, and ADA provide significant protections, gaps in coverage and enforcement restrict their efficacy.

A multifaceted strategy is a requirement to resolve these issues and challenges. Businesses need to implement inclusive policies such as equitable pay plans, transparent hiring practices and diversity training programs. Anti-discrimination laws must be strengthened by policymakers and ensure that these laws are consistently enforced, especially when it comes to intersectional discrimination. For society to be inclusive, preconceptions and stereotyping must be stopped while awareness and education should be raised. In addition to being morally right, combating discrimination is an absolute economic necessity. We can unlock the full potential of workers and workplace by

establishing egalitarian conditions. In other words, creating equitable environment that will not only promote social development but also ensure sustainable growth. As this article has consistently demonstrated through real-world examples and literature at hand that achieving equality urges for actionable plan. A plan that promotes teamwork, strict and inclusive laws, and an honest approach to address structural discrimination. By individual and collective efforts, we can together create a future where discrimination is eliminated while diversity is appreciated.

A thorough, evidence-based strategy is required to tackle these complicated difficulties. According to research, companies that adopt inclusive policies—like fair compensation plans, open hiring procedures, and diversity training—see a rise in worker happiness, output, and creativity (Dobbin & Kalev, 2016). Moreover, governments must enhance anti-discrimination legislation and assure their consistent enforcement, particularly in cases of intersectional discrimination, as research reveal that marginalized groups often endure compounded disadvantages (Crenshaw, 1989).

Through education and awareness campaigns, which have been shown to lessen biases and improve social cohesiveness, stereotypes must be challenged and dismantled to create an inclusive society (Paluck & Green, 2009). Eliminating prejudice is not only morally right, but also economically necessary. According to McKinsey & Company (2020) research, companies with diverse workforces perform better financially than their counterparts, which emphasizes the necessity for equal working conditions.

A tangible and implementable plan is necessary to achieve equality, as this article has demonstrated through empirical data and real-world case studies. This strategy should prioritize cooperation, the establishment of strict yet inclusive legislative frameworks, and a dedication to tackling the underlying causes of systemic discrimination. We can build a future where variety is actively respected and acknowledged via persistent individual and group efforts, guaranteeing long-term economic sustainability as well as social advancement.

To effectively combat discrimination and promote inclusive environments, the following suggestions are put out for society, corporations, and policymakers:

To encourage fair and transparent behaviors as well as increased awareness of unconscious biases, businesses should implement diversity and inclusion training programs. According to research, workplace inclusion increases by 24% in companies that provide thorough diversity training (Harvard Business Review, 2021). Businesses should reduce decision-making biases by using transparent hiring and promotion procedures. For instance, blind recruitment and uniform performance reviews could assist businesses in dealing with systematic and other discriminations. Conducting routine audits must be carried out to identify and address salary disparities based on age, gender, or disability. This would help to ensure pay parity and equity. Provide secure channels for workers to report incidents of harassment or discrimination without being worried about retaliation.

Legislators must enforce existing anti-discrimination legislation, including Title VII, the ADEA, and the ADA, ensure industry-wide compliance, and keep an eye on businesses' operational procedures. Expand legal protections to combat intersectional discrimination, where individuals encounter many forms of bias and discrimination (Crenshaw, 1989). Legislators ought to mandate that organizations release reports evaluating diversity measures and discrimination complaints. Transparency and openness should be promoted in organizations. This data can be used to inform evidence-based policy initiatives. To combat stereotypes and promote diversity in communities,

businesses, and educational institutions, policymakers ought to fund public awareness campaigns.

Societies must raise awareness of the detrimental effects of discrimination through media coverage, school curricula, and community efforts. To guarantee that underprivileged communities are empowered, support and encourage grassroots initiatives. Institutions ought to answer for their functions. Social conventions that uphold or support injustice and discrimination should be challenged, and societies should embrace diversity in order to foster cultural transformation. In order to create a fair environment that benefits people, companies, and society as a whole, stakeholders may work together.

Despite providing important insights into the causes and consequences of discrimination, this study has limitations. Future research would take a more comprehensive approach and produce more comprehensive findings if these limitations were addressed.

Prejudice based on gender, age, and disability was the main emphasis of the study; racial, religious, and LGBTQ+ prejudice was not included. There is a greater reliance on case studies and secondary data, which limits the conclusions' predictability. Surveys, focus groups, interviews, and observations are examples of primary data collection techniques that could yield more in-depth insights. Not all aspects of the intersectionality of discrimination have been discussed in this article, where individuals encounter many overlapping forms of bias. A woman of color with a disability, for example, may face compounded discrimination, which is not taken into consideration by this methodology.

Future studies should look at the intersectionality of prejudice to have a better understanding of how different forms of bias interact and aggravate each other's effects. This can entail taking into account qualitative studies that chronicle the actual experiences of individuals who face intersectional prejudice. Future research will look at how technology can either increase or decrease discrimination. For example, whereas AI-driven technologies can lessen human biases in hiring, they may exacerbate pre-existing gaps and inequality if they are not developed inclusively (World Economic Forum, 2022). Future study will take a longitudinal approach to track the long-term efficacy of anti-discrimination laws and workplace activities. This would provide priceless insight into long-term fixes. To comprehend the global features of discrimination, future research will take into account cross-cultural comparisons and the effects of prejudice in both advanced and emerging economies.

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The Role of Ethical Frameworks in Project Management: A Systematic Review of Decision-Making and Outcomes

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Abstract
This study examines the ethical dilemmas encountered by project managers and the methods they use to resolve them. Based on a systematic review of 120 research papers from the past 15 years, supplemented by personal observations, the study identifies and evaluates the application of various ethical frameworks in workplace decision-making. Key frameworks analyzed include justice, utilitarianism, and virtue ethics. Using a bibliometric approach, the findings reveal that utilitarianism and individual rights are the most frequently used frameworks for ethical problem-solving, whereas individual responsibilities play a minimal role in decision-making. Furthermore, the study highlights the significant impact of ethical frameworks on project outcomes and emphasizes that decision-making approaches vary across organizations. The paper concludes with practical recommendations for enhancing ethical decision-making in project management.

Keywords: *Ethical dilemmas, project management, utilitarianism, justice, virtue ethics*

JEL Classification: D63, D81, M12, M14, L20

Introduction

Overview
According to Cobb (2015), project managers frequently face ethical dilemmas while managing teams and resources. These dilemmas arise from conflicts of interest, transparency, and resource allocation. For instance, project managers might face pressure to misrepresent project progress to stakeholders, which can erode trust and exacerbate ethical conflicts (Smith, 2018). These situations can create significant stress and require careful judgment to maintain both professional integrity and the success of the project. Apart from this, project managers must avoid unethical behavior that can result in legal problems, project delays, and harm to the organization and their reputations (Davis, 2021). Therefore, utilizing ethical decision-making frameworks helps organizations maintain transparency, trust, and accountability throughout the project lifecycle.

Problems at work may take many different forms, and each one has an impact on employee choices

and organizational results. One prevalent kind is the ethical dilemma, in which workers must decide between moral principles, such honesty and organizational loyalty. For instance, despite the potential personal repercussions, an employee can find it difficult to decide whether to report a colleague's misbehavior (Taylor, 2023). Role conflict is another problem that arises when workers are subjected to competing demands from several authorities, which causes stress and a lack of clarity about priorities (Lee et al., 2021). For example, a worker may find it difficult to balance family obligations with a manager's desire for overtime. The third kind is the resource allocation problem, in which workers must choose how to divide scarce resources, such as money or time, which might lead to sentiments of injustice or partiality (Trammell, 2013). One example may be giving a project in one department priority over another because of financial constraints. These conundrums impact workplace dynamics and decision-making processes and are well examined in the literature on organizational behavior (Treviño & Nelson, 2021).

This article expands the empirical knowledge about different ethical dilemmas faced by project managers, enhancing understanding among academics and professionals. Moreover, it thoroughly examines real-world scenarios and frameworks for making decisions, making it an invaluable resource for upcoming research on project management ethics (Olschewski et a., 2024). Businesses can use this article to enhance their code of ethics and assist project managers in properly resolving conflicts, therefore maintaining openness and equity in their operations (Panel, 2021). The article will also help students by expanding their understanding of ethical issues in project management, which will equip them for circumstances they might face in the real world. The article intends to add to academic research and practical applications in project management through its analysis and recommendations. This article aims to explore “the ethical dilemmas project managers face and provide solutions”.

Literature Review

This section contains key theories related to ethical dilemmas at workplace.

Theories of Ethical Dilemmas

In project management ethical dilemmas can be navigated through various philosophical theories each offering distinct approaches to decision-making. Kantian ethics, which is based on the ideas of Immanuel Kant, emphasizes the importance of upholding comprehensive principles and fulfilling right obligations without considering the repercussions. This method encourages project managers to be truthful and open, supporting the candid disclosure of issues even when doing so could have unfavorable consequences (Pinto 2014). For instance, a project manager in a construction project may need to reveal that safety protocols were not followed properly; despite knowing it could lead to penalties or project delays. According to Kantian ethics, the manager's obligation is to disclose the truth, upholding moral duty and integrity (Schmidt,2024).

Instead of evaluating activities based on how they perform, utilitarianism concentrates on enhancing overall happiness. According to Harrison and Lock (2017), a project manager may be able to defend the reallocation of supplies from a lower-priority project to a more important one if doing so benefits the organization, even though there may be negative effects on some of the participants. For example, a project manager may decide to divert resources from a community outreach program to a critical research and development initiative, arguing that the potential societal benefits of the R&D project outweigh the harm caused by reducing support for the community program (Mitra,2019).

Virtue ethics, influenced by Aristotle, emphasizes the importance of moral character and virtues rather than focusing solely on rules or consequences. This theory states that by making choices with honesty, equality, and sincerity in mind, project managers may promote an ethical culture. For instance, a project manager who consistently shows compassion and patience in resolving conflicts among team members, instead of using authority or harsh measures, embodies the virtues of fairness and empathy central to virtue ethics (Wyre,2024). By exhibiting these qualities regularly, managers foster a healthy work atmosphere in addition to providing an excellent example for their people. With a focus on developing ethics and excellent character, this method promotes responsible leadership and, in the end, results in more compassionate and responsible choices in project management. This indicates that for project managers, becoming a person who continuously demonstrates qualities in daily acts is the key to conquering moral challenges rather than simply sticking to organizational regulations or seeking great benefits. For example, when a project manager opts to distribute bonus incentives equally among the team members rather than allocating them based on personal biases, they are prioritizing fairness and equality, reinforcing ethical standards within the team (Soltani, 2023).

When managers allocate resources fairly, communicate openly, and make decisions with honesty, they create an environment in the workplace where moral conduct is accepted as the standard (Davis, 2021). As workers can trust and follow a leader who demonstrates good ethics, this also boosts team morale and creates a sense of unity.

Types of Ethical Dilemmas

Project managers regularly encounter various ethical dilemmas that complicate their decision-making processes (Pritchard, 2002). Table 1 shows different type of ethical dilemma at workplace.

Table 1: Types of Ethical Dilemmas in Project Management.

Ethical dilemma Types	**Description**	**Examples**	**Sources**
Honesty vs. Loyalty	This dilemma involves choosing between being truthful or staying loyal to a friend, family member, or employer. It can be challenging when honesty could harm relationships or careers.	Example: A project manager discovers a team member has falsified progress reports. Reporting it could harm the team member's career but staying silent compromises project integrity.	Harrison & Lock (2017)
Confidentiality vs. Harm	This dilemma arises when deciding whether to break confidentiality to prevent harm. It involves balancing the duty to protect private information with the need to prevent potential danger.	Example: A project involves sensitive information that could affect stakeholder trust if disclosed, but full transparency is expected.	Müller et al. (2016)
Fairness vs. Personal Gain	This dilemma involves choosing between acting fairly according	Example: A manager has the opportunity to promote a friend over a	Hodgson, Paton, & Cicmil (2019)

	to established rules or pursuing personal gain, which might disadvantage others.	more qualified candidate. Choosing personal gain could be unfair to the other candidate.	
Short-Term vs. Long-Term Gains	This dilemma involves choosing between actions that offer immediate benefits or those that might be more beneficial in the long run but require more effort or time.	Example: A company considers whether to cut corners to meet a deadline or invest in quality processes that may take longer but yield better results over time.	Pinto (2014)
Individual Rights vs. Collective Good	This dilemma involves balancing individual rights and freedoms against the needs or benefits of the larger group or society. It often requires weighing personal liberties against broader societal needs.	Example: Implementing a public health measure like mandatory vaccination might infringe on individual freedom but could protect public health.	Shao, Ritchie, & Goodwin (2017)
Integrity vs. Compliance	This dilemma involves deciding whether to strictly follow rules or act according to personal or professional integrity, which might require bending or breaking rules.	Example: A worker notices a safety violation that is against company policy but not strictly illegal. Reporting it could mean facing backlash, but ignoring it compromises safety.	Russell & Blanchard (2018)

Source: *author's illustration*

Ethical dilemmas in project management, such as conflicts between truthfulness and loyalty, confidentiality and harm prevention, fairness versus personal gain, immediate versus future benefits (Klein, 2024), individual versus collective interests, and adhering to rules versus maintaining integrity (Robb, 1996; Grover, 2024). Apart from this, applying ethical theories like Kantian ethics, utilitarianism, and virtue ethics allows project managers to navigate these dilemmas effectively, ensuring their decisions align with both ethical standards and organizational objectives (Rueter, n.d.). It is important to note that the work of Kaur et al. (2024) regarding varying style of leadership demonstrated by project managers has a role in the success of the organization. However, the study did not explain the aspect of dilemmas these project managers face during the execution phase. Each dilemma is exemplified and referenced from key sources.

Research Methodology

For this study, an extensive review of available literature was conducted through library databases and Google Scholar. Systematic review is more about understanding the research phenomenon in

depth rather than width (Kaur & Haque, 2024). The researcher used search phrases like "project management," "ethical dilemmas," "ethical decision-making," and "leadership in project management" to find academic articles and papers that were significant. Peer-reviewed publications such as Project Management Journal and Journal of Business Ethics have also provided valuable ideas into the moral issues that project managers encounter. This body of work provided case studies that enabled an analysis of practical uses, in addition to providing the theoretical model framework. Moreover, textbooks on project management leadership (Cobb, 2011; Pinto, 2014) further supported the theoretical background by outlining key ethical frameworks such as utilitarianism and virtue ethics in decision-making.

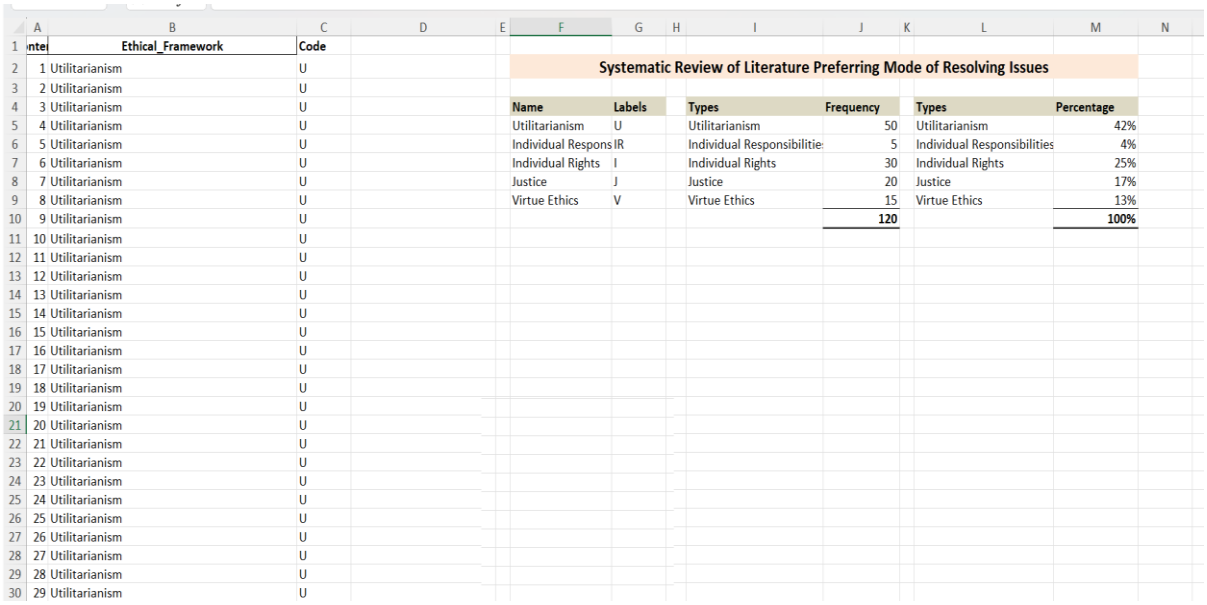
Secondary data, such as case studies and previously published research papers, formed the major portion of the analysis. Secondary sources provide appropriate foundation for analysis (Haq et al., 2024). Studies by Müller et al. (2016) and Hodgson et al. (2019) were particularly useful in providing a historical perspective on how ethical dilemmas have evolved within project management over the last decade. These sources were critically reviewed to identify patterns and gaps in ethical leadership. The bibliometric analysis of over 20 articles helped ensure a broad and diverse range of perspectives. Additionally, books like Advanced Project Management (Harrison & Lock, 2017) were consulted to understand structured approaches to leadership and ethical decision-making.

Table 2: *Inclusion and exclusion criteria*

Inclusion	Exclusion
Internet/Library Research	Questionnaire and Survey
Personal observation	Primary data
Secondary data	Statistical test

Source: *author's illustration*

In this research paper, researcher employed specific inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure relevant and reliable data (Table 2). These sources provided theoretical and practical insights into ethical dilemmas in project management. Based on a bibliometric analysis (Figure 1), the researcher found that most of the literature preferred utilitarianism over individual rights as a framework for resolving ethical dilemmas.



	A	B	C
1	nte	Ethical_Framework	Code
2	1	Utilitarianism	U
3	2	Utilitarianism	U
4	3	Utilitarianism	U
5	4	Utilitarianism	U
6	5	Utilitarianism	U
7	6	Utilitarianism	U
8	7	Utilitarianism	U
9	8	Utilitarianism	U
10	9	Utilitarianism	U
11	10	Utilitarianism	U
12	11	Utilitarianism	U
13	12	Utilitarianism	U
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20	19	Utilitarianism	U
21	20	Utilitarianism	U
22	21	Utilitarianism	U
23	22	Utilitarianism	U
24	23	Utilitarianism	U
25	24	Utilitarianism	U
26	25	Utilitarianism	U
27	26	Utilitarianism	U
28	27	Utilitarianism	U
29	28	Utilitarianism	U
30	29	Utilitarianism	U

Systematic Review of Literature Preferring Mode of Resolving Issues

Name	Labels	Types	Frequency	Types	Percentage
Utilitarianism	U	Utilitarianism	50	Utilitarianism	42%
Individual Respons	IR	Individual Responsibilitie	5	Individual Responsibilities	4%
Individual Rights	I	Individual Rights	30	Individual Rights	25%
Justice	J	Justice	20	Justice	17%
Virtue Ethics	V	Virtue Ethics	15	Virtue Ethics	13%
			120		100%

Figure 1: *The most effective approach to resolving ethical dilemmas*

Several techniques were used to ensure the validity and reliability of this manuscript. Using peer-reviewed sources, which are published in the field of project management ethics, such as scholarly publications, case studies, and textbooks enabled this study to maintain content validity. Following universally accepted and recognized ethical frameworks, such as utilitarianism and virtue ethics, as described by authorities like Cobb (2011) and Pinto (2014), ensured construct validity. Reliability was attained by ensuring reputable sources are included and transparency in the methodology is kept throughout the process. Additionally, researchers ensured that ethical consideration is maintained throughout the study. Since the study relied heavily on the secondary sources, privacy and confidentiality required additional care. Thus, all data sources were checked and referenced properly to satisfy the confidentiality concerns. The researcher stayed impartial when examining the literature and refrained from interpreting the outcomes in a biased manner by keeping objective stance and check-re-check approach. This study ensures that its conclusions are trustworthy and dependable by upholding the highest academic and ethical standards.

Findings and Discussions

The Google research revealed a variety of ethical dilemmas commonly encountered in project management. These included issues related to transparency, conflicts of interest, resource allocation, and the balance between individual rights and organizational goals. Transparency dilemmas, such as withholding important information about project risks, were frequently discussed, with studies showing that many project managers struggle to find a balance between confidentiality and honesty (Brown, 2020). Conflicts of interest, where personal relationships or external pressures influence decision-making, were also prominent, aligning with the findings in Cobb's (2011) study, which highlighted the ethical challenges arising from overlapping professional and personal interests.

Utilitarianism emerged as one of the dominant ethical frameworks mentioned in online sources. This theory emphasizes the greatest good for the large number of people and was often cited as a guiding principle for project managers dealing with resource allocation or team management dilemmas (Smith, 2021). Furthermore, individual rights were another critical point, especially in situations where employees' freedoms clashed with organizational directives (Jones & Harris, 2022). Several sources confirmed that project managers often rely on a mix of utilitarian and rights-based approaches to ensure fairness and equality in their decisions.

Findings from personal observations

In a series of personal observations and systematic review of the literature, researcher examined the six ethical approaches and collected the responses to each dilemma that are evident to be most effective. It is important to that personal observation include meeting teams and observing their decision-making styles and preferencing.

Proportion of Ethical Frameworks Used

This distribution highlights the preference for outcome-driven and rights-based frameworks over duty-based approaches in project management decision-making. Among the six ethical approaches listed—justice, utilitarianism, individual rights, individual responsibilities, the common good, and virtue—three approaches (utilitarianism, individual rights, and virtue ethics) each account for 24% of the total responses. Justice is chosen 14% of the time, while the common good and individual responsibilities account for 10% and 5%, respectively. This indicates that utilitarianism and

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individual rights are considered equally important for ethical decision-making, followed closely by virtue ethics (See Figure 2). Interestingly, among the six ethical approaches examined (justice, utilitarianism, individual rights, individual responsibilities, the common good, and virtue ethics), utilitarianism, individual rights, and virtue ethics were the most frequently used, each accounting for 24% of responses. Justice was applied in 14% of cases, while the common good and individual responsibilities were less common, at 10% and 5%, respectively.

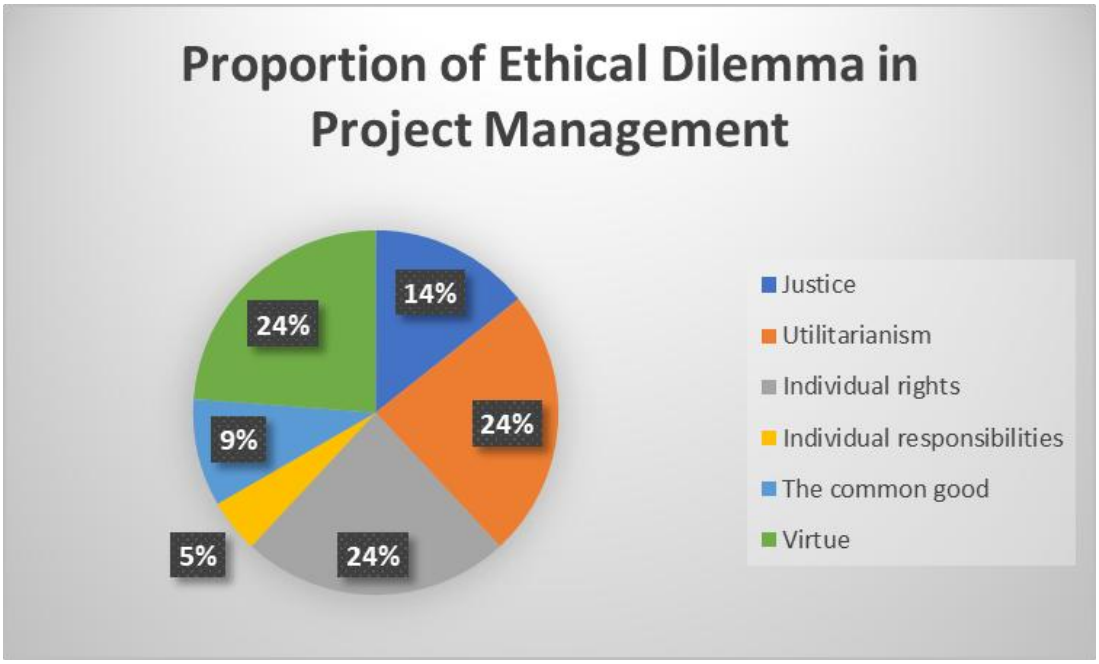

Figure 2: *Proportion of Ethical Dilemma in Project Management.*

Gender-Based Differences in Ethical Decision-Making

The study found variations in ethical preferences based on gender. Male participants showed a stronger preference for justice, utilitarianism, and individual rights (each at 30%), whereas female participants leaned toward virtue ethics (36%) and the common good (18%) (Figure 3). Female respondents also considered individual responsibilities (9%) more than their male counterparts (0%) (Figure 3). This suggests that males prioritize outcome-based and justice-centered approaches, whereas females emphasize personal integrity and collective well-being.

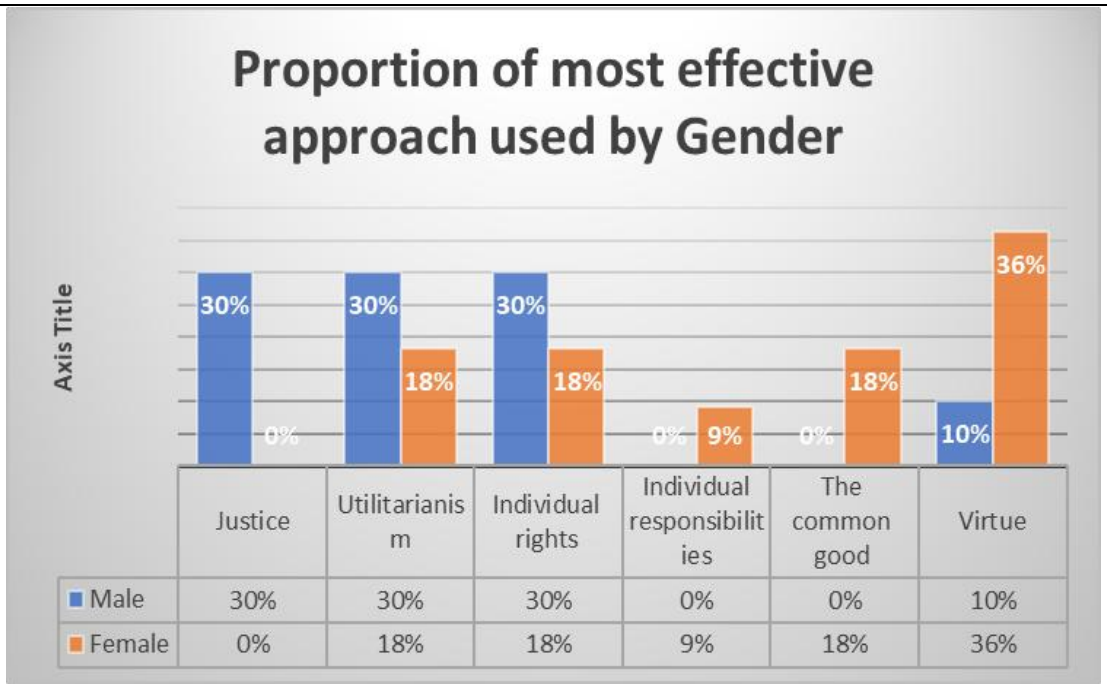

Figure 3: *Proportion of effective approach used by gender.*

Systematic review revealed that utilitarianism, individual rights, and virtue ethics were the most commonly used ethical frameworks, each accounting for 24% of responses. Justice was cited in 14%, while the common good and individual responsibilities were less frequent, with 10% and 5% respectively, reflecting diverse ethical approaches in decision-making.

The findings confirm that project managers commonly rely on a mix of ethical frameworks, with utilitarianism, individual rights, and virtue ethics being the most frequently applied. The study also highlights gender-based variations in ethical decision-making, with males tending to prioritize justice and outcome-driven approaches, while females lean more toward virtue ethics and the common good. These findings offer valuable insights into how ethical frameworks are applied in project management and the potential influence of gender on ethical preferences.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study examined the ethical frameworks commonly employed in project management decision-making, with a particular focus on the dilemmas of transparency, conflicts of interest, and resource allocation. The findings indicate that project managers tend to rely on a mix of utilitarianism, individual rights, and virtue ethics when navigating these ethical challenges. Utilitarianism, which emphasizes the greatest good for the greatest number, along with individual rights, which prioritize personal freedoms, were the most frequently used frameworks. Virtue ethics, which centers on personal integrity and moral character, also emerged as a key decision-making tool, particularly among female participants.

The data obtained from systematic review revealed that the gender-based differences in ethical preferences, with male participants showing a stronger preference for justice and outcome-driven approaches, while females leaned more towards virtue ethics and the common good. These differences suggest that while ethical decision-making in project management is largely guided by outcome-driven principles, there is a significant role for personal integrity, community well-being, and moral character, especially in certain demographics.

Overall, the study underscores the importance of considering a range of ethical frameworks in project management to ensure fairness, transparency, and accountability. It also highlights the need for further research into how gender, organizational culture, and other demographic factors influence ethical decision-making processes. By understanding the diversity in ethical approaches, project managers can improve their decision-making strategies, fostering a more ethical and sustainable work environment.

Research findings from the observation also explain that managers frequently rely on utilitarianism and individual rights frameworks because they make use of ethical theories including virtue ethics, Kantian ethics, and utilitarianism. Therefore, ethical leadership fosters fairness, transparency, and trust, enhancing organizational success and team morale.

Research limitations and future directions

This study is no exception from limitations. However, these limitations provide foundation for the future studies to commence research with more detailed-oriented and comprehensive approach. One of the major limitations of this study is that it heavily relies on secondary data. In other words, data used in this study is second-hand rather than direct information from the subjects. There is likely possibility that secondary data used in this study is on the verge of obsoleteness. In other words, the majority of the research was conducted using secondary data and literature reviews, which could not have included the most recent developments or moral dilemmas in the subject. Since, this study used already published papers backed by observation. Thus, there is no statistical test carried out. In other words, this paper lacks mathematical objectivity and numerical significance to determine the variables of interest. In addition to that, a plethora of papers have published on ethical dilemmas while the research only used 120 papers. This is a limitation because the sample size of paper could have been improved. Perhaps, the time constraints led to smaller sample size, which means that the results of this study lack higher generalizability. Furthermore, the study's findings are based on a limited sample of personal observations and existing literature, which may not fully represent the diverse experiences of project managers across different industries or cultural contexts.

This study used past papers and observations to commence analysis and draw conclusion. However, the qualitative perspective would have improved by inclusion of interviews and focus groups to gain the firsthand perspective (primary data). Moreover, the criteria of paper selection are limited to personal preference. The paper selection followed non-probability sampling strategy, which means that selection does not give equal chance. The selection criteria should be improved by using more systematic approach by incorporating probability sampling technique. The research design is cross-sectional which means the papers were reviewed in one-time lag. Ideally, future studies shall consider longitudinal design to commence systematic review in different time-lag. Perhaps, this would improve the outlook of paper. Additionally, the gender-based analysis, while informative, may not account for other factors such as organizational culture or regional differences that could influence ethical decision-making.

In future, studies should concentrate on gathering primary data via surveys and interviews to learn more about how project managers respond to moral conundrums. Quantitative approaches will provide statistical clarity and enable more objective findings. Studies using a cross-sectional design could examine how ethical decision-making and communication differ depending on factors including gender, team dynamics, and organizational structure. Including a wider range of academic sources and increasing sample size would also enhance the generalizability of findings. For more thorough results, mixed method approaches that combine qualitative and quantitative

data should be used. Furthermore, obtaining outside financing for in-depth case studies or visits to organizations might yield more insightful, useful information.

Recommendations for Organizations

Organizations should implement clear ethical guidelines and regularly train project managers on ethical decision-making frameworks like utilitarianism, individual rights, and virtue ethics. Managers can be better prepared to tackle problems in real-world scenarios by attending workshops and training sessions on these subjects. Building a transparent workplace where moral dilemmas are freely discussed can increase trust and enhance decision-making. Organizations should also foster an accountability culture that motivates managers to behave honorably and responsibly. Providing mentorship programs can also help project managers connect moral behavior with organizational objectives, which will strengthen team dynamics and improve overall performance.

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